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FROM BACH TO DEBUSSY

By

CARL ENGEL

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To

CARLETON NOYES

My dear Noyes,

Afflicted as you are with the delightful vices of a bouquineur, *you cannot be a stranger to the kind of irreproachable effusion for which the writer feels the need of apologizing in a humble preface—that no one wants to read. You also know the book in which the only thing worth reading is a charming or brilliant preface—written by some one other than the author. I would have asked you to insure at least the merit of this latter class to these few pages, had you not carried human kindness far enough in giving them the benefit of your sagacious criticism, in sharing the treacherous task of reading them when in proof, and lastly, by helping them to an honest label plainly suggestive of their literal and literary stint. It is a bootless undertaking to sum up the work of a Bach or the life of a Wagner in a half hundred sentences, fashioned after the pruned and formal manner of the First Grade Reader.*

You are familiar with the origin of these "lifelets": how a sanguine publisher, looking for biographical notes to be included in twelve piano albums, entitled "Master Series for the Young," turned to me with an encouraging "and-

it-might-as-well-be-you." So it was, indeed. But now, after adding eight more to the original twelve, and uniting them within one cover, I wonder if the finished product is of a sort that could appeal to the "Trapper an' Injun" stage of Youth for which the publisher solicitously had intended it. Even though it be no book in usum Delphinūm *of the nation, I hope you will feel that the not-too-young and the not-too-old lovers of music, who are sometimes "too busy to read," may find in these sketches—seen through the wrong end of the opera-glass—a diminutive but fairly vivid outline of their particular love, or loves, and gain, incidentally, a glimpse of the progress which music has made within the last three centuries.*

It is not an irksome sense of duty that prompts me thus to place your name at the head of this volume. I should deprive myself of a great pleasure and satisfaction, were I to dismiss these sheets without a greeting addressed to you, in token of friendship and appreciation.

Yours cordially,
C. E.

Marblehead, Massachusetts
August, 1921

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INTRODUCTION

Many have been the attempts to give a definition of music. That none of them has exhausted all that enters into the substance of an orchestral symphony and a camel driver's chant, sufficiently proves the complexity of the matter. To call music "the sounding art of numbers," is perhaps to point toward its severest beauty. It also links the apparent whims of changing moods and studied fashions to something elementary, eternal. There are mathematical problems which admit of solutions that possess the elegance and conclusiveness of a waltz by Chopin. There are musical compositions which have about as much charm as an algebraic progression *ad infinitum*. But herein lies one of the difficulties which we encounter when dealing with music, that there are people—and not a few of them—to whom an algebraic progression gives a thrill. And that is, after all, their privilege and very

private concern. Others are thrilled only when their heart is touched.

Differences in mentality and taste account for the many and contrasting types of "music-lovers," and for what each of them considers to be "music." For while it can be raised to the lofty level of an art, it suffers the common lot of all things handled by mankind, that it may be degraded to standards inconceivably low. The important and disconcerting fact is, that all along this gradual descent the mission of music remains identical: it ministers to the same wants; it springs from, and appeals to, the same instincts and emotions; it always appeases the craving for a satisfaction which is differentiated only by degrees of refinement. This refinement, of course, is based primarily on the general culture of the individual, but more particularly on the capacity of hearing, or the development of the human ear.

Musical history is, in reality, nothing but an account of the evolution of hearing.

Most of the musical controversies are quarrels between "retarded hearing" and "advanced hearing." They often interfere with the settling—comparatively easy—of the question as to whether a piece of music is intrinsically good or bad, or, more correctly, whether it is well or badly made. Time is patient, and almost invariably it is just.

Music, as we understand it, does not exist in nature. The scales, which so far have been the basis of every tonal system, in the Orient and Occident, were artificial products, arrived at by speculation or chance, and sanctioned by habit. Our present system may be overthrown at any moment. The paradox of music is that the ear must accustom itself to a sound in order to derive an æsthetic pleasure from it, and that as soon as this has taken place, the novelty and, with it, the pleasure begin to wane. Other sounds, of new potency, must have birth. Helmholtz, at the end of his researches, had to acknowledge: "The system of scales and

modes, and all the network of harmony founded thereon, do not seem to rest on any immutable laws of nature. They are due to æsthetic principles which are constantly subject to change, according to the progressive development of knowledge and taste." This is not quite true, however.

It is not so much a constant progress of "taste," for that is a fitful factor in the growth of nations or individuals. It is rather a steady forward reach of hearing, which, incidentally, brings with it a deeper "knowledge." Taste is something that Mozart possessed not less than Debussy. Nor is it always the most "knowing" master who is the most "tasteful." But between Mozart and Debussy the human ear learned to hear many new things. It gained a finer perception of, and greater subconscious familiarity with, the inherent qualities of musical tone and its several overtones. This development clearly necessitated the recurring demand for fresher and keener tonal

stimuli, with which to give our senses—when they become dulled to accustomed impressions—the relatively same degree of satisfaction for which we are always craving. Probably the ladies who shed a polite tear (*una lagrimetta*) at hearing for the first time the *tremolo* of the strings, employed by Monteverdi, were not less markedly stirred by their experience, than we are in listening to some of the musical manifestations of our day.

As our knowledge increases, it seems to reveal more and more that, if music does not exist in nature and is not based on "immutable laws of nature," there is in tone itself a peculiarly communicative force. And one wonders, is not this because in tone there are present, and ever united, the fundamental principles of motion, matter and law? Thus tone would be a symbol of some trinity, dimly perceived, variously interpreted, but always active in this world. For tone is "matter moving according to certain rules." We are following these rules to farther

regions, just as our widening comprehension of the natural laws is winning us a slightly clearer vision of the universe. As there are eyes which will not see the light, so there are always ears which prejudice closes to innovations. A great deal of "older" music still exerts a certain charm by reason of its quaintness and the inclination of some people to regret the past. There are works of the earlier masters that are still pleasant to hear, and are kept young, not by historical interest, but by their ever-green, surpassing beauty. And yet what is the age of Bach's B minor Mass compared with that of the Parthenon, the age of Palestrina's Madrigals compared with the statuettes of Tanagra?

Future generations will undoubtedly have an easier task—thanks to mechanical sound reproduction—in forming an accurate opinion of our present music, than we are facing in our effort to understand the music of the ancients. If it was simple, it was so only in contrast with our own, just as the "futur-

ists" will be deemed harmless in a century or two. However modest the instrumental resources of Egypt or Greece may have been, the human voice, probably, was much the same at all times, or at least ever since man walked on his hind legs alone. The vocal organ, possessing infinite flexibility and the power of minutest differentiation, did, for that very reason, always offer the ear a dependable medium by which to register the most sensitive shades of tonal variation. But such registration became subject to control by the intellect. When science discovered the nature of tone and found the mathematical core of music, it forgot the sweet fruit that surrounds it. Science tried to prescribe for the ear such intervals as were *mathematically* the most correct and purest. The ear revolted, the ear seemed to know better, and to prefer the juicy fruit to the kernel. These quarrels between theorists and composers go back to the first records of musical history. We know what the disputed subjects were,

but we have no conception in what, for example, the music of Aristoxenos differed from that of Pythagoras, or how much nearer Didymus came to inventing anything like a "tune" than did the learned Ptolemy. We have no music that dates back to Homer's "Iliad" or to the Pyramids. The Gregorian chant of the Catholic Church and the oriental melismas of the Synagogue, which are the oldest "living" music, are truly impressive only in their proper place. We can admire a Grecian torso. The fragment of an Egyptian column may set us dreaming. In music, fragments and torsos are unprofitable. Words, singly and dependent alone on their evocative strength, amount to little until they are strung together into sentences of articulate speech. They, too, must form a complete whole to convey a message.

Tones are the words of music. But this youngest of arts is still fashioning its speech and is constantly enlarging its vocabulary. This extension is the mooted question which

presents itself in every chapter of musical history, to be settled always by common consent, much as "good usage" has sanctioned the valid transformations of a language. Only the progress of music, having begun much later, seems to have been the more rapid.

Broadly speaking, the advance of music is determined by our changing conceptions of concord and discord, which, in turn, depend upon the ability of the ear to assimilate more and more overtones as consonant parts of one sound. Discord forms a legitimate means to artistic ends, without which music would become stale. But because every discord has a tendency to become a concord, when the ear has grown to know it too familiarly, bolder and subtler sounds must be found to enrich harmony and amplify melody with new discords.

Dr. Charles Burney, shrewd and industrious musicographer, was singularly far-sighted when in the course of his travels through

Italy he wrote: "No one will, I believe, at present [1770!!], deny the necessity of *discord* in the composition of music in parts; it seems to be as much the essence of music, as shade is of painting; not only as it improves and meliorates concord by opposition and comparison, but, still further, as it becomes a necessary stimulus to the attention, which would languish over a succession of pure concords. It occasions a momentary distress to the ear, which remains unsatisfied, and even uneasy, till it hears something better; for no musical phrase can end upon a discord [?!]; the ear must be satisfied at last. Now, as discord is allowable, and even necessarily opposed to concord, why may not *noise*, or a seeming jargon, be opposed to fixed sounds and harmonical proportion? Some of the discords in modern [1770!!] music, unknown till this century, are what the ear can but just bear, but have a very good effect as to contrast. The severe laws of preparing and resolving discord, may be too

much adhered to for great effects; I am convinced, that provided the ear be at length made amends, there are few dissonances too strong for it."

That is an astoundingly lucid and correct statement, considering the time when it was written. But what would the learned Doctor have said to Schönberg, or even Ravel; what to the *bruiteurs*, the "noise-makers" of Milan? Sometimes it is hard to live up to our own theories. Is noise ever going to be really an integral part of a musical art-work? Where does the future of music lie? In a new division of the octave into smaller steps than "half-tones"? Will the octave itself become an unbearably trite and offensive interval? It is the simplest, regarded as the ratio of 2 : 1 between two sounds; it is the most sensitively dangerous, regarded from a contrapuntal angle. Perhaps the next "liberation" of sound will not come from a composer's brain until the scientist, in his laboratory, has removed a few more shackles

from the enthralled goddess. A new instrument, or a new group of instruments (somehow connected with electricity), will require of the composer to unlearn his trade, to fit himself with a new technique and find a novel set of "rules." Music will no longer borrow from architecture, painting and poetry characteristics which are in reality foreign to the art of sounds. Tonal sprays may pour from a hose; a sounding stream, issuing from a tap in the wall, may surge against our ears and drown our senses in a bath of ecstasy. Rhythm will be not only physically reactive, it will have assumed an emotional import. Having become more independent of painting and poetry, music in combination with colors or words will be a thing of heightened eloquence and deeper meaning.

I
BACH

Begin the song, and strike the living lyre:
Lo, how the years to come, a numerous and well-
fitted quire,
All hand in hand do decently advance,
And to my song with smooth and equal measure
dance;
While the dance lasts, how long soe'er it be,
My music's voice shall bear it company.

—*Cowley*

I

JOHANN SEBASTIAN BACH

It is not enough to say that all ancient music was more or less primitive, and therefore cannot be of interest to us. The musical speculations of the Greeks retained vital concern as late as the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when theorists tried to establish a division of the octave into intervals that corresponded to those of the Hellenic philosophers. Rousseau may be right in saying: "C'est perdre son temps, et abuser de celui du lecteur, que le promener par toutes ces divisions"; but it is well and important to remember that, as Columbus set out to find the Western passage to India and discovered America instead, so did these medieval scientists, seeking for the modes of antiquity, really furnish the impetus that led to our present "tempered" diatonic scale, and to the genera of major and minor.

With the practical demonstration of "tempered" intervals (that is, with the division of the octave into twelve approximately even half-tones) the foundation was laid for our modern "enharmonic" system, in which flats and sharps sound identical and are interchangeable. The era of true chromaticism was inaugurated and it became possible to construct satisfactory keyboard instruments, which were no longer bound to the painfully uncompromising modes of the Greeks and the later Church, but afforded an easy and instantaneous transit through the circle of the twelve tonalities, major and minor, giving thereby into the hands of the composer the master-key of modulation, which opened successive doors to Palestrina, to Monteverdi and to Bach.

There are many mansions in the house of music, and not a few of them still waiting to be unlocked.

With difficulty can we realize what patient and circuitous effort had to precede

the final adoption of the key of C major, of which the great theorist Zarlino (1517–1590) spoke as being used only by the vulgar musicians of the street who accompanied rustic dances in it, and which he called *il modo lascivo*, or the *wanton* key! The most wanton thing about it, perhaps, was that persistently sharpened "leading-note," the seventh degree of the scale, which clashed so openly with the fourth degree that when the two were brought together in the notorious "tritone" (augmented fourth or diminished fifth) they *had* to resolve by mutual repulsion into a dulcet sixth, or fall into the arms of an harmonious third. It became more and more evident that tone combinations have "tendencies," and that latent in every chord there is a desire to *move*, by contraction or expansion, into tension or release; that every chord is a link in a chain of similitudes and contrasts. The "leading-note," *la note sensible*, in company with the dominant and its seventh, was first to make this unequivocally

clear. The sense of tonality, the sense of "inevitableness" in tonal progressions, took root in the ear; and the theorists came promptly straggling after with their rules and vetoes, rearing that formidable structure known as the "Laws of Harmony," a structure ever subject to repair and alteration!

The orthodox ecclesiastical composers, the Okeghems and Josquins, with their contrapuntal skill and foibles, in spite of all their greatness, had to pass on before the "new" spirit; their churchly modes lost all identity in the fusion of "temperament"; the sway of their grand vocal music was usurped by a little instrument, a box of wire strings, which, in time, begot that tribe of clavichords, clavicembalos, harpsichords, virginals, spinets, clavecins, pianofortes, *Hammerklaviere*, concert-grands, and—player-pianos! Saint-Saëns, adroit master and independent thinker, aptly characterizes these consequences when he writes: "Who, in our epoch, has not undergone the powerful in-

fluence of the piano? That influence began even before the piano itself, with the 'Well-tempered Clavichord' of Bach. With the day that the 'temperament' in tuning had brought about synonimousness of flats and sharps, and allowed the free use of all tonalities, the spirit of the keyboard entered the world; that spirit has become a devastating tyrant of music by propagating the heretical enharmonic system. Practically all modern music has sprung from that heresy: it has been too fecund to deplore it; but a heresy it remains, nevertheless, destined to disappear on a probably distant and fatal day, as a result of the same evolution which gave it birth."

It is certain that the influence of Bach, and especially of his cyclopedic "Well-tempered Clavichord," on the music of the last two centuries, was predominant. Bach is the turning-point, the hinge of old and new. He is as much the culmination of

medieval groping as he is the foundation of all modern unfolding in music.

Bach does not stand isolated, unconnected with the past, much though his all-believers like to think so, even as "true-believers" are willing to credit the coffin of Mohammet, at Medina, with floating unsupported 'twixt heaven and earth. Bach had, of course, forerunners from whom he learned and borrowed; how else could he and Handel have been contemporaries? They drank from the same source, but the draught affected each differently. Nor need one seek this source in so remote a region as the sixteenth century, with its Arcadelt and Morales, Orlando and Palestrina, masters of polyphonic vocal composition, carrying their art to extremes of sophistication, until it became music for the eye rather than the ear, music that was stilted and grown lifeless.

The seventeenth century, not marked by any overtowering musical genius, is the true

period of preparation, counting ten prophets to every messiah of the following *saeculum*. There may be room for comparison between that era and our own post-Debussyan days. The year 1600 is a convenient date on which to fasten the name of Claudio Monteverdi, whose innovations, whose "New Discords, in Five Parts," cannot easily be overestimated. We are again living in an age when the need for "new discords" seems paramount. Three hundred years hence, will a writer of "Musical Snap-shots" be able to dispose of Richard Wagner in one sentence? If Monteverdi, furtherer of opera, must thus summarily be dealt with, Carissimi, elaborator of cantata and oratorio, deserves at least a mention; great men, both of them, self-made and "radical," first to prove definitely the expressive possibilities of the *recitativo*. Music was beginning to assume dramatic values. Among Carissimi's pupils the most important was Alessandro Scarlatti, fluent writer, himself an excellent

teacher, father of Domenico Scarlatti, to whom belongs the distinction of having evolved the harpsichord style which became a model for all future piano music.

The type of "*musica da camera*," intimate, learned and polished, was eminently fitted as a field for experimentation. The *ricercari* and *fantasie* were expanded and given greater formal unity; they became sonatas and concertos. Diversity was gained, in instrumental music, by appropriating and ennobling popular dance movements. As to Arcangelo Corelli, one is tempted to see in him even more than a precursor. Orchestra technique owed much to him. If, as we are told, he insisted on uniformity in bowing with his players of stringed instruments, it was probably because he was the first to see the need of an even and pliable orchestral body, preparing by his training the later exploits of the famous Mannheim Orchestra under Stamitz.

However briefly these voices crying in the wilderness may be evoked, that of the Englishman, Henry Purcell, must not be forgotten. "If ever it could with truth be said of a composer that he had *devancé son siècle*, Purcell is entitled to that praise"—and British pride said not too much. France, on the other hand, in these years of fermentation, had the least of musical yeast to offer, and before the advent of Jean Philippe Rameau, animated with the spirit of research, savant as much as fashioner of beautiful and living sounds—before Rameau, France could boast only of Jean Baptiste Lully, Italian by birth and character, "creator of a style of music which, since his time, instead of advancing towards perfection, as is imagined, has perhaps lost more than it has gained." Lully's talent for intrigue was not matched by sufficient musical originality to accomplish what he set out to do. Across the Rhine, the road was opened by Schütz, brought up under Italian teachers though

he was, a Teuton to the core, and worthy to take first rank as pioneer in German music. Keiser, Pachelbel, Buxtehude and the erudite Kuhnau, carried on his work, the first in opera, the others in organ composition and chamber music — craftsmen of merit all, commanding figures none of them.

Here entered Bach.

Musical talent had distinguished many of his ancestors, and among his eleven sons were several noted musicians, who, in their lifetime, attracted even greater attention than did their illustrious parent. But they have gone the way of all flesh; their compositions, with few exceptions, have been forgotten, while the name and works of the great Johann Sebastian are still alive to-day and bid fair to outlive the music of to-morrow.

With Spring's beginning, on March 21, 1685, Bach came into the world and brought to it a newer, richer spring of music than it had ever known. He was born in the lovely

old town of Eisenach, nestled among the pine- and oak-covered mountains of Thuringia, with the famous Wartburg towering above the valleys, that ancient castle where Martin Luther translated the Bible into the language of the people. Bach, a musical reformer, was brought up and steeped in the very air of Protestant simplicity and uprightness. What Luther did for the Bible, Bach did for music, in making it speak a language that goes straight to the heart of all people. Many of his loftiest pages were written for the service of the church.

Bach received his first music lessons from his father, who was town-musician at Eisenach. Orphaned, when he was ten years old, he came to live and pursue his studies with an older brother. But he was not happy there, and soon went to Lüneburg, a small town in Germany's vast region of purple heather, darkgreen moors and orange sunsets. Here he was accepted as chorister at St. Michael's, was taught the

violin, organ and clavichord, and was familiarized with the rules and rudiments of composition. He made frequent pilgrimages to other towns, tramping the high-roads alone or in the company of fellow-students, to hear other musicians perform. Thus he walked all the way to Lübeck to meet old Buxtehude. The example of renowned masters stimulated him to gain ever greater perfection in his profession. When he finished his studies, he went, as was the custom of the day, into the employ of princes or wealthy parishes, as court musician or church organist.

After a short stay in Weimar, as violinist of the ducal orchestra, he obtained a position as organist of the New Church at Arnstadt, in Thuringia. It was here that, in 1706, the Consistory formally charged him "with having been in the habit of making surprising *variationes* in the chorales, and intermixing divers strange sounds, so that thereby the congregation were confounded."

Having been called to the more lucrative post of organist at Mühlhausen, in June 1707, he married in the following October his cousin Maria Barbara Bach, who died in 1720. He took for his second wife Anna Magdalena Wülken, a gifted musician.

The scenes of his activities shifted rather frequently, until the year 1723, which marks the date of Bach's most important appointment, as "Cantor" (choir director) at the Thomas School in Leipzig, and as organist at the church of the same name, succeeding the admired and many-sided Johann Kuhnau. He remained a resident of this city to the end of his life, and it was here that his genius reached its fullest stature. His fame spread throughout the land, although no amount of honors could change his simple, homely ways. In 1736 he was named court composer to the Elector of Saxony, then also King of Poland. In 1747 he accepted an invitation of Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, to visit Berlin, where his second son,

Karl Philipp Emanuel Bach, had established himself and had gained an enviable reputation.

Bach had been nearsighted from childhood, a failing that had become aggravated by his long and industrious copying of older masterworks and of his own compositions, which was necessary in the days when the printing of music was a rare and expensive luxury. At last, in 1749, an unsuccessful operation on his eyes was followed by total blindness. His general health declined. He regained his sight unexpectedly on July 10, 1750, but was stricken with apoplexy ten days later, and died on July 28.

He had been working to the very end, and his prolificness is as remarkable as his originality. About one-third of the music composed by him is said to have been lost. Even so, the quantity of his preserved music is enormous. It may be divided into four groups: (1) the study material that he wrote for the members of his family and his

many pupils; this material includes the "Well-tempered Clavichord"; (2) the Preludes, Fugues, Toccatas, etc., for organ which remain the daily mental food of every good organist; (3) the Overtures, Suites, etc., for Orchestra, the Chamber-music and the Concertos and Concert-pieces composed for artist friends and princely patrons, and still the delight of concert-goers; and (4) the works written for, or inspired by, the church. These last are Bach's finest achievements. Built on the foundation of supreme craftsmanship, they are reared with the devotional fervor derived from unbounded religious faith. Bach's settings of the Lord's Passion according to St. Matthew and St. John, and his B minor Mass, belong to the greatest music of all times.

It is for the great things we do, that we are remembered, but for the little things, that we are loved. Bach's work is full of "little things," gem-like, perfect in cut and fire. We

are so apt to see in him only the abstract of all musical science, weigh his powers as a contrapuntist, admire his architectural mastery on a gigantic scale. The father of twenty children was a family-man, going about his business undisturbed by whining babies, writing little tunes for his wife, Anna Magdalena, and for his boys when they grew up. The austere and patriarchal head of the house was also of a sensuous and loving nature, simple and passionate. It is not only the supreme agony of Christ that moves his big heart to sublime utterance; many a strain tucked away in this or that cantata, suite or concerto, betrays the vibrant soul that depends as much on the joys of this world as it hopes in those of the next. Circumspect and versatile, Bach was observant of all that went on, musically, around him. His industry, his fixedness of purpose, have not been surpassed. The "modernity" of harmonic progression he often indulged in, remains almost as baffling to us

as it was to the Consistory of Arnstadt. Under his fingers, graceful old dance-tunes sparkled with incisive rhythm. He could be humorous, ultimate test of higher wisdom. The glory of God, the inexorable majesty of Death, have never been made more plausible to the mind of man, than in some eight or sixteen measures of a Bach chorale. When concerned with the great issues of human destiny, his music breathes immortal life and lifts us from out the narrowing conceptions of space and time.

II
HANDEL

His works form, as it were, a monument, solitary and colossal, raised at the end of some blind avenue from which the true path of advance has branched, and which, stately and splendid though it be, is not the vestibule through which art has passed to the discovery and exploration of new forms of beauty.

—*Edinburgh Review:* January, 1887

II

GEORGE FREDERIC HANDEL

There exists a well-known painting which pictures the boy Handel, in his night-shirt, seated before the old harpsichord in the dead of night, and surprised by the astonished family, which is headed by the father, lantern in hand, all pressing into the room and bewildered at seeing the youngster's calm disregard for paternal injunctions. History does not tell whether the immediate consequences of the discovery were sensibly painful for little George; but if they were, they did not deter him from pursuing, all his life, a vocation to which his singular genius called him in spite of his father's wish that he should be a lawyer. And the little player in a nightie grew up to be a great master in a fine periwig, clothed in silk and velvet, decked with jewels, the friend of

kings and dukes, basking in the glorious rays of popular and universal veneration.

Handel was born at Halle, in Saxony, on February 23 of the year 1685, or a little less than a month before the birth-date of J. S. Bach, whom he survived by nine years, dying at London on April 14, 1759. But the lives of these two great contemporaries have little in common, save that both lost their eyesight with advancing age. Bach married twice, Handel not at all. Bach never left the shadow of the church; Handel was always drawn to the footlights of the stage. Bach is the luminous daybreak, Handel the towering sunset cloud. Simultaneous, they are well nigh antipodal.

Providence played an important rôle in the life of Handel. A chance visit with his father, a bleeder and surgeon, to the court of a German princeling who expressed his delight when he happened to hear the boy play, was the cause of his receiving music lessons. He made such rapid strides that,

ten years old, he was a performer of no mean ability and had written several pieces. The father, now proud of his prodigy, took him in 1696 to Berlin, where young Handel earned the admiration of all the musicians, and where for the first time he heard an opera, a style of musical composition to which he was to devote a great deal of his time, and a form of entertainment in the providing of which he was to make, and subsequently lose, much money. After the father's death, in 1697, Handel, prompted by filial devotion, finished his school education, and in 1702, as law student, he entered the newly inaugurated University of Halle; he also filled a position of church-organist, as a means of livelihood. This entailed the writing of much music for the services, and it is estimated that "in twelve or fourteen months Handel composed several hundred cantatas!" Little remains of these cantatas, at least in their original form, although it may be safe to assume that the rather economic composer utilized a

great deal of these earlier inspirations in works of his later period, a method he adhered to all his life, and not uncommon with other composers of his time.

But the lure of the stage was too strong. In 1703 he went to Hamburg, where resided the best German opera troupe of the day, directed by the eminent and prolific Reinhard Keiser. Handel entered the theatre orchestra as a violinist, later advancing to the post of clavecinist, and finally graduating conductor. All the while he busied himself with the writing of operas, some of which were successfully produced. His temperamental ways once led him to quarrel at the theatre with his associate Mattheson, a talented composer and able historian, and after the then current fashion they proceeded to settle their differences with the aid of swords. If Providence had not placed a large brass button between the point of Mattheson's weapon and Handel's heart, the story of

his life would have ended here. The antagonists are said to have made up forthwith.

Opera writing was Handel's avowed ambition, and it could be developed only in the land where opera had been invented a mere hundred years earlier and was then especially flourishing; that land was Italy. Handel crossed the Alps in 1706, and spent three fruitful years in studying the works of Italian masters, among whom he made many friends, and writing, in turn, many master works of his own which won him the enthusiastic plaudits of music-loving Florence, Venice, Naples and Rome. On his rereturn to Germany, he accepted a position as court musician to the Elector of Hanover. The desire to see new countries seized him soon, however, and in 1710 he went to England on a "leave of absence." London was to be his real home. There his operas became the rage. Fame and money effaced all memories of, and sense of obligation to, his Hanoverian employer. The English

court attracted him more; and, not pausing to weigh political considerations, he wrote a "Te Deum" in praise of the peace of Utrecht, signed in 1713, whereby England was distinctly favored at the expense of the Continent, including the sulking Elector of Hanover. Providence seemed sadly remiss when in 1714, according to dynastic settlement, this very Prince, as George I, ascended the throne of Great Britain. Handel was in an awkward situation. But Providence came to the rescue with a royal pleasure trip on the river Thames, for which Handel wrote some "water music" that greatly delighted the King and led to a reconciliation. Thereafter, Handel was in high favor at the Court. For a time he was attached as organist to the Duke of Chandos; he gave the daughters of the Prince of Wales lessons on the harpsichord, writing for the young ladies, among other studies, "The Harmonious Blacksmith." But his life was devoted to the opera and to the theatre, composing many

of his scores in postcoaches on his mad journeys across the Continent, in search for singers, ever greater and more renowned, with whom to attract a fickle crowd. The story of these thousand and one evenings of opera is almost as dramatic and fantastic as are the tales of the Arabian Nights. Princes of the blood royal and princesses of florid song pass before us in a long and brilliant chain, good genii who bring treasures to the box office, demons sowing the seeds of jealousy; magic airs which charm a populace, tragic complications spelling ruin. A Danish traveller reports that in 1728, at the début of a new soprano, the audience threw more than 1000 guineas on the stage, in token—crude but positive—of its approval. Competition added to the zest of the game. If the composers Bononcini and Porpora were not trying to steal the thunderbolt from Handel, it was *La Cuzzoni* bent on wresting from *La Faustina* the fulgurating flash of *coloratura*. Intrigues, mismanagement, the

race with rival companies, led finally to Handel's failure. Discouraged and broken in health, he turned to another form of composition, the oratorio, in which he was to immortalize himself.

Cured from a passing illness caused by worries and nervous exertions, he showed in his oratorios "Saul" and "Israel in Egypt" (both written in 1738) that the old vigor remained, if it was not even redoubled. The organ concertos and *concerti grossi* for strings and clavecin date from the same period of remarkable creativeness. In November, 1741, he went to Dublin upon the invitation of the Duke of Devonshire, lord-lieutenant of Ireland, carrying in his trunk the manuscript of "The Messiah," written in the space of three weeks (from August 22nd to September 14th). Destined to become an institution of Musical Christendom, it was first publicly performed at Dublin on April 13th, 1742.

According to Burney, "Handel at this time 'did bestride our musical world like a Colossus.' He had done with operas, and after his return from Ireland, applied himself wholly to the composition of sacred music. In 1745, I performed in his band, sometimes on the violin, and sometimes on the tenor, and by attending the rehearsals, generally at his own house in Lower Brook Street, and sometimes at Carlton House, at the desire of his constant patron the late Prince of Wales, I gratified my eager curiosity in seeing and examining the person and manners of so extraordinary a man, as well as in hearing him perform on the organ. He was a blunt and peremptory disciplinarian on these occasions, but had a humour and wit in delivering his instructions, and even in chiding and finding fault, that was peculiar to himself, and extremely diverting to all but those on whom his lash was laid."

Handel's oratorios are not written in the style of Bach. They are not inter-

spersed with chorales in the singing of which a pious congregation joins. His theatrical mannerisms he retained. While his subjects are sometimes biblical, they are more often mythological or allegoric. His melodies have the grander sweep, the richer ornamentation of stage music. His massive choruses have dramatic life rather than devotional depth. Outside of his many oratorios and his numerous operas (to German, Italian and English texts), Handel wrote other works for the church, concertos for organ, pieces for the harpsichord and much beautiful chamber music. Through it all, you hear the accomplished artist and idolized man of the world who writes to obtain a certain effect, and achieves his ends with the help of unflagging energy and inexhaustible resourcefulness.—His ashes rest in Westminster Abbey with those of his foster-land's greatest sons.

III
GLUCK

. . . vous espérez que je vais mettre Grétry au-dessus de Gluck parce que l'impression du moment, fût-elle plus faible, doit effacer celle qui est éloignée? Eh, bien, il n'en sera rien... j'aime, je chéris le talent de M. Grétry, et j'estime et admire celui de M. Gluck.

—*Mlle. de Lespinasse*

III

CHRISTOPH WILLIBALD GLUCK

Gluck was, first and last, a composer of operas.

The opera is a mongrel thing, and, for that reason perhaps, is afflicted with native weaknesses which—ever since its conception in the last years of the sixteenth century—have caused its growth to be marked by so many crises. This offspring from the union of Poetry and Music, has also inherited important traits from other and more distant relatives, such as Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, the Drama and the Pantomime. It has always had to suffer from the jealous interference of these different strains. No sooner had the first, vague specimen of opera been derived from the ballet and "pastorale" by that circle of Florentine amateurs which included the poet Rinuccini and the musicians Peri and Caccini, than Claudio

Monteverdi, a man of genius, improved upon the then prevailing methods of the chanted play, and incidentally broke new roads into theretofore unexplored realms of harmony. Gluck, in his endeavor to fight the surfeit of florid and meaningless melody indulged in by the Italian school of 1750, not only reorganized the opera, but paved a way for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, as well as for Mozart's "Don Giovanni." Wagner—in opposing the froth and sparkle of Rossini, the turgid pomp of Meyerbeer—followed his own doctrine of the "music-drama" (akin, in type, to that of Gluck) and wrought the marvels of sound which have not ceased to color the musical thought of his successors. Then followed Debussy with "Pelléas et Mélisande," writing music in which the spoken phrase again became decisive for the melodic curve of the voice-parts (much in accordance with Monteverdi's practice). Lastly, Igor Stravinsky's "Petroushka," abolishing the word completely, reverts to

pantomime and dance alone. The circle seems closed, so far as concerns operatic possibilities. But music has made greater strides in those three centuries, through its connection with the stage, than in the previous three thousand years.

The opera stage—that place where all the Seven Arts so strangely mingle—has been the favorite battleground on which these rival relatives have settled their pretensions to supremacy. It is significant that in these combats music should oftenest have championed the cause of either poetry, the drama, or of painting, rather than her own, and yet have reaped the spoils of victory herself in what is not merely peculiar to dramatic ends, but most essentially musical. Every time that operatic reform was sought, it was musical reform that was achieved. And reform, in art, is not infrequently a remembering of some vital principle, which in the course of time has been lost to view, while less important factors have developed to such a degree

that real advance is possible only by the return to an earlier point of departure, which is generally identical with simplification of artistic means.

Thus Dr. Burney, after meeting the composer at Vienna in 1772, was justified in writing: "The Chevalier Gluck is *simplifying music.*" That puts the facts into the fewest possible words. But the story of how Gluck was led to realize the need for simplification and succeeded in accomplishing it, is not so easily told, particularly as much of his early life and development is shrouded in comparative darkness.

The parish register of Weidenwang, a village of the Bavarian Palatinate, shows that "Christophorus Wilibaldus" was baptized there on July 4, 1714, but it is now generally accepted that he was born at the nearby Erasbach (not far from the Bohemian border) on the second day of the month. The station of Gluck's parents was of the most humble. His father was a for-

ester in the services of various Austrian and Bohemian noblemen. The family was undoubtedly of Czech origin. It seems that in 1717 the Glucks were transferred to the Bohemian estates of Prince Lobkowitz, near the town of Komotau. Christoph inherited the love of music characteristic of the Bohemian race, and grew up in a country where the rich Catholic convents and landed gentry cultivated all arts, especially music. Such surroundings could not fail to kindle his talents. He received a good school education, and in 1732 was sent to the University of Prague to finish his humanistic studies. In order to replenish his meagre purse, he gave music lessons, sang in church and played for dances, receiving his pay sometimes in victuals.

At Prague, the Minorite father Bohuslav Czernohorsky (who had been choirmaster at Saint Anne's of Padua and organist at Assisi) gave Gluck the first systematic instruction in composition. Through the munificence

of Prince Lobkowitz, Gluck was enabled in 1736 to go to Vienna, where he continued his studies and often played at musical entertainments in the house of his benefactor. There he attracted the attention of the Italian Count Melzi, who engaged him as "private musician," and in 1737 took him to Milan where he placed young Gluck under the direction of J. B. Sammartini. Gluck remained for four years the pupil of this able musician. In 1741, when his apprenticeship was nearing its end, he wrote his first opera, "Artaserse," to words by Metastasio; it was produced at La Scala, and proved a great success. Gluck, at that time, was imbued with all the principles of Italian opera, and the number of his works written in the Italian manner, which he was later to repudiate so fervently, is great, for they cover more than thirty years of his life. His fame as an opera composer began to spread beyond the boundaries of Italy.

In 1745, upon the invitation of Lord Middlesex, manager of the Haymarket Theatre, Gluck went to England. But the times were not favorable to opera. Handel, as a producer, had just gone through another failure. In London the Rebellion was raging; all foreigners were suspected. Finally, on January 7, 1746, the season opened with Gluck's "La Caduta de' Giganti," which had only five performances. Handel had a very poor opinion of the young composer's talents. Gluck also met Dr. Arne in London. What influence the latter's simple English ballads may have had on Gluck, is difficult to determine. It is certain that to these London days and to Gluck's bitter experience with the unsuccessful adaptation of new words to some of his older tunes, dates his striving for "simplification" and his realization that text and music should closely fit each other: the word-sense admits of only *one* musical interpretation, which must be emotionally telling, metrically correct,

and supported by combinations of instruments which lend proper coloring to the dramatic situation.

Alert and ambitious in his youth, vain and grasping in old age, always bent upon the pleasures and riches of this world, Gluck had that shrewdly calculating mind which, paired with abundant inborn talent, produces the most spectacular careers of genius. After returning to Germany in 1746, Gluck spent some time in Dresden, and later went back to Vienna. The opera composer of those days led a vagrant life, as commissions for new works were apt to come from all points of the compass, and generally meant that the composer had to prepare and conduct the performances of his work. In the autumn of 1748 Gluck was filling such an engagement at Hamburg. Thence he went to Copenhagen, upon an invitation from the royal Danish court to write a festival cantata. His stay at Copenhagen is noteworthy only in so far as it brought him into contact with

Johann Adolf Scheibe, a mediocre composer, but a keen critic and astute theorist. Gluck possessed, in the same measure as Wagner, the aptitude for absorbing, and improving upon, the ideas of others. Thus he not only fell heir to the melodies of his homeland, traceable in more than one of his later works, but successively he profited by the lessons of the contrapuntist Czernohorsky, the harmonist Sammartini, the balladist Arne, and finally of the æsthetician Scheibe. The last-named, who extolled the merits of Lully and Rameau, and condemned all that was Italian, had probably the greatest influence upon the course which Gluck's development now took. It was Scheibe who pronounced the necessity for the overture of an opera to "prepare" the listener for the drama, and to "reflect," as it were, the whole of the action. The second and revised edition of his "Critical Musician" appeared in the year in which Gluck visited Copenhagen. The book contains in sum and substance

all of Gluck's later principles of "operatic reform." Gluck did not put these ideas to a test until he wrote "Telemacco" for the Teatro Argentina of Rome, in 1750, which was the first example of the later "Gluckian" tendencies.

On his return to Vienna, from Copenhagen, he asked for the hand of one of his pupils, Marianna, the daughter of Joseph Pergin, a wealthy money-lender and trader. But the father refused to have a musician for son-in-law. When Gluck learned in Italy, the following year, that old Pergin had suddenly died, he hastened back to Vienna and captured Marianna with her handsome dowry. It proved a very happy marriage, for loving and meek Marianna was easily overawed by the splendid selfishness of her great husband.

After the production of two new operas in Rome, in 1754, Gluck was raised to the rank of a papal *nobile*. Although no record of the patent seems to exist in the archives

of the Vatican, the fact remains that from that time on he signed himself, and was known to all, as the "*Chevalier* Gluck." In the same year, he was appointed master of the Imperial Chapel at Vienna and was entrusted with the musical education of the little Archdukes and Duchesses, a position which he held until 1764 and which, ten years later, led to his warm reception in Paris by his former pupil, Marie Antoinette, who at the age of fifteen was married to the Dauphin of France.

The man who provided Gluck with the first libretto that answered the demands of Scheibe was the Italian Calzabigi in Vienna. Not a great poet, but a man with dramatic instinct, he treated "Orfeo ed Euridice," a subject dear to operatic composers since the days of Monteverdi, in a manner that afforded Gluck the opportunity to show his "innovations." The novel work received its first performance at Vienna, October 5, 1762, and created a sensation. The cast

included only three leading characters; for the first time, the chorus entered into the action of the drama; the music displayed no brilliant fireworks, but was charged with deep emotion. As though Gluck did not at once feel secure in his new element, this opera was followed by several others in which the composer reverted to the old *Italianism*. But with "Alceste," again to a text by Calzabigi (1767), Gluck definitely abandoned his earlier style, and in a celebrated preface to the score he laid down his new creed. It is practically a declaration of war, and begins with this challenge: "When I undertook to set this poem it was my design to divest the music entirely of all those abuses with which the vanity of singers, or the too great complacency of composers, has long disfigured the Italian opera, and rendered the most beautiful and magnificent of all public exhibitions, the most tiresome and ridiculous." The challenge was taken up by the musicians whom he attacked.

The ideal at which Gluck was aiming had been approached nowhere more closely than in the French opera. It was to Paris, therefore, that he looked as the place where he could realize his dreams. Du Rollet, attached to the French embassy at Vienna, entered appreciatively into Gluck's plan, and tried to interest the Paris Opéra in a new work on which he and Gluck had collaborated. The difficulties which were raised at Paris were finally brushed aside through the intervention of the young Dauphiness. On April 19, 1774, "Iphigénie en Aulide," that gem of classic stagecraft and inspired music, first saw the footlights at the Royal Academy in Paris.

Ten days after the première of "Iphigénie," Louis XV, returning from a hunt, fell ill with smallpox, and died on May 10, 1774. Marie Antoinette, upon becoming Queen of France, bestowed her royal grace upon her old teacher, and with the support of the court Gluck's position seemed im-

pregnable. Forever famous is that controversy between the followers of Gluck and those of the Italian opera composer, Piccinni, who came to Paris in 1776, and whose works had been loudly and justly acclaimed in Italy, for he commanded a greater lyric charm than Gluck possessed. The anti-Austrian party, led by the Queen's aunts, encouraged the *Piccinnists* with their approval. The political quarrel and artistic competition were merged, to the great satisfaction of Gluck's pugnacious nature. When he was invited to take up his permanent abode in Paris, he demanded 12,000 *livres* the year, a carriage *for his wife* (!), and a decent house. In return he agreed to furnish one opera every year, except if prevented by sickness, and he professed his willingness to advise young composers, "so that good taste may become established, without danger of ever being changed."

Gluck's remarkable personality, not less than his music, fascinated court and public.

When at rehearsals, in shirt-sleeves and with a nightcap pulled over his bald head, he finally got through shouting his disapproval at singers and orchestra until his wishes were carried out, and he sank exhausted and perspiring into a seat, the *pairs* of France would wait on him with cooling lemonade, and bring him his wig and velvet coat.

His letters, whether in German or French, are marked by a haughty disregard for orthography, and abound in sallies and clever observations, also in bitter and spiteful criticisms. In July, 1775, when he was at work on the remodelling of "Alceste" for Paris, he wrote to Du Rollet, who was making a French translation of the libretto and wanted to introduce at the end of the third act a situation which was not according to the composer's taste: "What, in the devil's name, do you want Apollo to do there with the Arts; they are only good in his company on Mount Parnassus; here they interfere with the interest in the catastrophe." He

proceeded to give minute directions for the scene, going so far as to sketch out the dialogue. His temper was formidable. Burney speaks of him as "a very dragon, of whom all are in fear." When at work his head was "buzzing like a beehive, and his wife in despair." But he could be charming and captivating. When Burney visited him in Vienna, on Wednesday, September 2, 1772, he found the composer "very well housed," with a pretty garden and "a great number of neat and elegantly furnished rooms. . . . He has no children; Madame Gluck, and his niece who lives with him, came to receive us at the door as well as the veteran composer himself. He is much pitted with the smallpox, and very coarse in figure and look, but was soon got into good humour. He began, upon a very bad harpsichord, by accompanying his niece, who is but thirteen years old, in two of the capital scenes of his famous opera of Alceste."

After the French performance of "Alceste" in 1776, followed "Armide" the next year, and in 1779 the wonderful "Iphigénie en Tauride." His last work written for Paris, "Écho et Narcisse," was a failure. Disappointed, after five years of unheard-of success and glorification, he retired sulkingly to his castle Berchtholdsdorf, near Vienna, where he remained for the last eight years of his life in wilful silence, watching the stock-market and enjoying the delicacies of his well-appointed larder and cellar. On May 30, 1780, he wrote to Paris: "I wish that some one come to take my place, and please the public with his music, that I be left in peace, for I can't forget all the prattle of friend and foe I had to listen to, with regard to Narcissus, nor to pills I had to swallow; the Frenchmen can't yet distinguish a musical eglogue from an epic poem!" He was peeved and did not hesitate to say so. He sought solace in the blessings of rare vintages. But after a stroke of apoplexy

he had to renounce them, too. On November 25, 1787, having two friends from Paris for dinner, he could not resist the temptation, and, at a moment when his watchful spouse had left the room to order the carriage for his regular afternoon drive, he emptied a glass of wine, which brought on another stroke. This time it was a fatal one.

IV
HAYDN

Les ouvrages anciens ne sont pas classiques parce qu'ils sont vieux, mais parce qu'ils sont énergiques, frais, et dispos.

—*Sainte-Beuve*

IV

JOSEF HAYDN

The lifetime of "Papa Haydn" covers one of the most eventful epochs in history. Josef was born in 1732 (on March 31) at Rohrau, Lower Austria, seven years before Maria Theresa (1740-80), Empress of Austria, ascended the throne. He died in 1809 (on May 31) at Vienna, a few days after the troops of Napoleon had occupied the Austrian capital.

Within these dates lie the wars between Prussia and Austria (1740-63), Bavaria and Austria (1778-79), Turkey and Austria (1789-91), the French Revolution, the advent of Bonaparte and his victorious campaigns against the greater part of Europe, especially Austria. But not only in the countries in which Haydn lived or which he visited, was history being made, in his day; across the Atlantic, a war of liberation from English

sovereignty was followed by the organizing of thirteen colonies into the United States of America. This war-ridden eighteenth century is among the most fertile and highly developed eras in the evolution of peace-loving arts and sciences.

Music, when Haydn was born, was still a comparatively young art, lacking in the more rigorous conceptions of form. It owes to him, especially in the field of orchestral and chamber-music, the establishing of certain moulds and frames which still remain the architectural basis of musical composition. This creative and unerring sense of shape and balance is Haydn's distinguishing mark among the masters of his time, and the great heritage he left to his successors. He had given early proof of musical talent and had a fine voice, which was the cause of his leaving the rural province of his birth, in 1740, and becoming a choirboy at St. Stephen's, in Vienna, where he received a musical and general education. In 1748 he

lost his voice and his position in the choir. Then began a time of hardships, during which he gave lessons, played for dances and street "serenades," which latter belonged to the fashionable ways of courting in those days. He lived in the same house with the famous poet and librettist Metastasio, whose young *protégée*, Marianna Martinez, became one of his pupils. Through Metastasio he made valuable acquaintances among musicians. The pupil grew up to be the famous Mademoiselle Martinez whom the learned English traveller and musicographer Burney heard at Vienna, in 1773, and of whose accomplishments he could not say enough.

Haydn soon found an opportunity to come in touch with rich and noble amateurs who did much for the cultivation of music by maintaining private string-quartets, orchestras and even theatrical troupes. Haydn wrote for them his first piano sonatas and chamber-music; his first opera dates from 1753, three years before the birth of Mozart,

whom he survived by eighteen years, a period pregnant with the composition of his greatest oratorios, "The Creation" and "The Seasons."

In 1761, Haydn entered the service of the princely house of Esterhazy, Hungarian magnates of immense wealth and great culture; four masters, belonging to three generations, were his kind and generous protectors. He remained in their employ for twenty-eight years (practically the whole of Mozart's artistic career), spending the summers in Eisenstadt, Hungary, and the winters in Vienna. Paul Anton Esterhazy dissolved the orchestra in 1790, granting Haydn a substantial pension. Haydn now felt free to accept the invitation which had come from London to visit England and to conduct orchestra concerts there, also to write for these occasions a set of new symphonies. He arrived in London on January 2, 1791, and stayed in England until 1792. On his return to the Continent, he

passed through Bonn, where a musician named Ludwig van Beethoven, aged twenty-two, was introduced to him. He thought so much of the young man's talents that he urged Beethoven to follow him to Vienna and study with him. In January, 1794, Haydn paid a second visit to London, where the same honors and pecuniary gains awaited him that had marked his first sojourn in England.

When Haydn returned to Vienna, in August, 1795, he was a celebrated master and rich man. Nicolas Esterhazy, son of Paul Anton, reinstalled the orchestra of his grandfather and placed Haydn at the head of it. Haydn bought a house near Vienna and enjoyed the fruits of his industry together with the homage paid to his genius. But the general unrest of Europe, particularly the revolutionary upheaval in France, made itself felt even in the quiet of Haydn's retreat. Napoleon Bonaparte had started on his dazzling round of military

and diplomatic victories. In the month of January, 1797, in which the great Corsican overthrew the Austrians at Rivoli, Haydn—being intensely patriotic—wrote the famous imperial hymn, which quickly became the rallying song of a faltering populace and army. The hymn has lately been thrown into the discard by a republican Austria.

In England, Haydn had heard wonderful performances of Handel's oratorios, and it was due to English influences that he now tried his hand at the same form of composition. "The Creation" was finished in 1798, first given in Vienna during the following year, and performed in Paris in 1800, the year of Napoleon's victory at Marengo. It was in Paris, too, that the first complete edition of Haydn's quartets was published, bearing the dedication "To the First Consul." Haydn was sixty-nine years old when he wrote "The Seasons," a work of perennial charm and universal appeal.

Continued wars had brought with them conditions which could not fail to undermine the already declining health of an aged and sensitive person. Haydn fainted, on the 10th of May, 1809, at the sound of French cannon bombarding Vienna; his spirit was completely broken when the enemy entered the Austrian capital, three days later; and on May 31 Haydn expired with—as tradition has it—a prayer for the house of Hapsburg on his lips.

They were truly great times in which this master lived; and great were his own achievements. Music was in a formative state, and it required just such a logical, clear mind as that of Haydn to open for it ways which made possible the organic development that it received at the hands of his successors. His special domains were the orchestra and the string-quartet. Even considering his long lifetime, his productiveness was amazing. Not equalling Mozart in the sensuous beauty of that composer's

finest inspirations, nor Beethoven in the grandeur of conception and power of expression, Haydn's music excels in animation, grace, and polish of workmanship, which are the salient features of that unique period—marked by frills and furbelows, Dresden china and minuets—commonly known as *rococo*.

V
MOZART

Je ferais dix lieues à pied par la crotte, la chose que je déteste le plus au monde, pour assister à une représentation de "Don Juan" bien jouée.
—*Stendhal*

V

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Only with the reverence felt for saints and martyrs, can one speak of Mozart's life and death. If ever a master was born, not made, it was the boy Wolfgang Amadeus, who seemed to have been taught music in another world, in a celestial realm, before he came to dwell on earth. And it is music of the spheres, indeed, that we hear in the "Jupiter Symphony"; music of elemental power that seizes our heart in the *finale* of "Don Giovanni"; music of supernal serenity and beauty that radiates from his *adagios* for string-quartet. Everlasting youth seems to have been bestowed by just divinities upon the work of one they called away so young.

When Mozart was born at Salzburg, on January 27, 1756, his father, Leopold, had been for thirteen years court musician to the Archbishop of that town; the family

lived in very modest circumstances. The father, therefore, was quick in taking advantage of his son's phenomenal gifts, which became apparent when the boy, at the age of four, was able to improvise little pieces at the clavichord. Being himself an excellent musician, Leopold gave the youngster the best of training. He obtained leave of absence from the Archbishop, in 1762, and took his six-year-old son and eleven-year-old daughter (Maria Anna, also a talented pianist) on their first concert tour. Now began a time of travel through southern Germany, to Paris, and to London, with stops at every royal court or principality, where the performances of the two prodigies earned much applause and rich rewards. The cherubic little fellow, whose delicate features and gentle ways were the delight of every one, passed from one princely knee to another, the length and breadth of Europe, being petted and caressed by soft, bejewelled hands, and having his pockets filled with

sweetmeats and ducats. The candy was soon eaten and the money spent. In 1766 the travellers returned to Salzburg, and young Mozart entered the Archbishop's orchestra at a salary of about three dollars a month! He studied counterpoint and composition, and composed many works, some of which were published; but his compositions did not meet with unreserved approval. A contemporary wrote of him: "He is one further instance of early fruit being more extraordinary than excellent."

Leopold Mozart, a far-seeing man, realized that Salzburg could not offer the proper development his son's talents demanded. He obtained another leave of absence, and in December, 1769, took the boy to Italy. Here the child won triumphs wherever he appeared. He received commissions for the composition of operas and other music. The eminent musician Padre Martini, of Bologna, praised him warmly; the Pope in Rome rewarded him with the "Order of the

Golden Spur"; at Milan, his opera "Mitridate" had twenty performances in succession. After such experiences the provincial life of Salzburg, the meager gain obtained there, were naturally depressing and discouraging. When the Archbishop refused him another leave, in 1777, young Mozart resigned his position, and tried his luck in Munich; but here his reception was rather cool. He fared better in Paris, where his symphonies had great success. Nevertheless, he made only a precarious living with teaching and with playing at private concerts. He finally was obliged to return into the service of the Archbishop, this time at a somewhat higher salary. With his "Idomeneo" he began to follow the methods of Gluck, who had imparted to opera dramatic life such as it had not possessed before.

In 1781, Mozart definitely left Salzburg for Vienna. Joseph II became interested in him and commissioned him to write an opera for the German stage which

had been inaugurated by the Emperor in 1778. Always fighting the adversities of life and trying hard to earn his daily bread, he sought refuge in the haven of marriage. But ill winds pursued him still, and his cares only grew. His superb opera, "The Marriage of Figaro," which contains the purest essence of charm, grace and wit (inspired by an epoch-making comedy of the French author Beaumarchais), was nearly made impossible at its first performance, in 1785, by the intentional neglect of intriguing singers, so that the composer had to appeal to the Emperor for help. In the same year fall the six wonderful quartets, dedicated to Haydn. "Don Giovanni" was successfully given at Prague, in 1787. During the period from 1788 to 1790 he composed his ripest orchestral symphonies.

Michael Kelly, the Irish tenor, tells in his Reminiscences of his first meeting with Mozart in Vienna: "He favoured the company by performing fantasias and capriccios

on the piano-forte. His feeling, the rapidity of his fingers, the great execution and strength of his left hand particularly, and the apparent inspiration of his modulations, astounded me. After this splendid performance we sat down to supper, and I had the pleasure to be placed between him and his wife, Madame Constance Weber, a german lady of whom he was passionately fond, and by whom he had three children.—After supper the young branches of our host had a dance, and Mozart joined them. Madame Mozart told me, that great as his genius was, he was an enthusiast in dancing, and often said that his taste lay in that art rather than in music."—Would that he had been a dancer, too, and could have earned the salaries of a Vestris, d'Auberval or Duport, instead of often going hungry. The world forgets sometimes to pay the piper.

Kelly gives this description of Mozart: "He was a remarkably small man, very thin and pale, with a profusion of fine hair, of

which he was rather vain.—He was fond of punch, of which beverage I have seen him take copious draughts. He was also fond of billiards, and had an excellent billiard table in his house. Many and many a game have I played with him, but always came off second best." We can almost see the sprightly figure jump around the green cloth, and hear the boyish laughter at some especially successful *coup*. Success was so negligent of him during the last span of his brief existence!

Named court-musician by the Emperor, in 1789, he still lacked the financial support that would have made his existence carefree. He refused a lucrative position offered him by the King of Prussia, because of his devotion to his imperial master. In the last year of his life he wrote "The Magic Flute" and "La Clemenza di Tito," two operas, the one in German, the other in Italian. The latter he completed in eighteen days. His last work was a *Requiem* mass. He passed

away on December 5, 1791, and was buried in a pauper's grave, unmarked and unremembered by his contemporaries.

The prodigy who could perform astounding feats, had been showered with honors and presents; the incomparable master, at the height of his creative powers, was neglected and died in want. The irony of Fate willed that on his deathbed he should be apprised of his nomination to the full conductorship at the cathedral of St. Stephen's, the first position that would have assured him ease. But his peace was to be eternal, and his glory immortal.

Mozart stands solitary in the history of music, detached and unsurpassed. His sunny nature, unclouded by the worries and griefs that weighed on him, found expression in tones that are, above all, human. His music breathes serenity and simplicity; his is an art that one is tempted to call "artless," thereby paying it the highest tribute possible. In his concertos and sonatas for

piano or violin, in his chamber-music for strings or wind-instruments, in his serious or his comic operas, in his choral compositions or orchestral symphonies—everywhere he has impressed upon his work the stamp of his personality, inimitable and unmistakable.

VI
BEETHOVEN

Sorrow is hard to bear, and doubt is slow to clear,
Each sufferer says his say, his scheme of the weal and woe:
But God has a few of us whom he whispers in the ear:
The rest may reason and welcome: 'tis we musicians know.

—*Robert Browning*

VI

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN

No composer left a clearer and more connected story of his life, than that which Beethoven wrote into his music. These works, stretching over a period of forty years, tell the growth of his marvelous genius from auspicious beginnings, through glorious struggles, to tragic grandeur. When he could no longer hear the sounds around him, he listened to a voice within; shut off from intercourse with humanity, he held communion with the stars. And then came into being the Ninth Symphony, the *Missa solemnis*, and the last string-quartets.

From the titles of some of Beethoven's compositions, from the dedications of others, and from the contents of nearly all of them, one may read the course of his life, and retrace an epoch in the world's history. Between that solemn mass, written for his

friend and protector, Archduke Rudolf—whose most illustrious title is not Prince of the House of Austria-Lorraine, nor Archbishop of Olmütz, nor Cardinal of the Roman Curia, but the "Piano-pupil of Beethoven"—between that triumphant expression of religious faith and a little "conciliatory" canon for Mælzel (the inventor of the metronome, whose futile efforts to perfect an ear-trumpet had irritated the poor sufferer), what wealth, what variety of "human documents!" Cries of passion, that call to the perfect mate; hymns to nature, which sing his love for wood and field; professions of ardent patriotism, evoked by the turn of political events: these are the three main themes that run through all of Beethoven's music, until at last they seem to be fused into one, that of sublime resignation. From a sentimental ballad, *Adelaide*, of 1796, instantly acclaimed and published in numberless transcriptions, to the *Eroica* symphony, first "privately" per-

formed in 1804; from the opera *Fidelio*, coolly received in 1805, to the quartets of 1826, decried as the deed of a lunatic: what stupendous strides, and also what illuminating side-lights on contemporary appreciation! And yet all Vienna followed his hearse, when he died on March 26, 1827, and all the world knew that it had lost a Titan.

As certain towns of Italy, during the Middle Ages, attracted painters from far and near, to work there under the protection afforded them by some art-loving dignitary of the realm or church, so was Vienna for a long time the goal of musicians, thanks to the enlightenment and munificence of the Austrian court and aristocracy. No one benefited more thereby than did Beethoven. Although born at Bonn, on the Rhine (December 16, 1770), young Ludwig had found early in his father's employer, Prince-bishop Max Franz, Elector of Cologne, a member of the Hapsburg family, who acted as his benevolent patron. It was due to

the connections between Cologne and Vienna that Ludwig, in his seventeenth year, was sent to the Austrian capital to pursue his piano studies. He had a few lessons from Mozart. Unfortunately, his mother's death soon called him back to Bonn, where he remained, giving lessons and pursuing his own studies, until in 1792 Haydn, passing through Bonn on his return from England, heard Beethoven and offered to accept him as pupil if he settled in Vienna. This invitation was too good to go unheeded. Beethoven's friend, Count Waldstein—and the story of Beethoven's life is largely a story of Beethoven's friends—saw to it that nothing interfered with the realization of this plan. And so Beethoven went to Vienna. He had great success with his concerts and was graciously received by Viennese society. He studied with Haydn, with the contrapuntist Albrechtsberger, and with the Italian Salieri. He was a brilliant player, of striking exterior and strange shy-

ness in his manner. Between a doting mother and a dissipated father, the formation of his character had been neglected, but his musical education left nothing to be desired. His zeal and earnestness enabled him in those years to lay the foundation for all of his future work. At first frankly imitative, following his teacher Haydn as an unparalleled example for the purely constructive part of music, using the sonatas of K. Ph. Em. Bach as models of pianistic style, he leaned toward the virtuoso and conventional side of a school that had almost outlived itself. From Haydn he learned the treatment and development of themes, the use of orchestral colors. The first piano sonatas, trios and quartets, a septet and the two first symphonies, with other works of lesser distinction, belong to this period.

With the year 1801 a decided change becomes noticeable. Beethoven has begun to find himself. Growing deafness, the first signs of which date back to 1796, his

various sentimental quests, too often ending in deception, are bringing their influence to bear on his state of mind. He confides the precarious state of his health to a friend, pledging him to absolute secrecy. A passing ray of sunshine pierces the clouds: "My life is a little pleasanter since I get again among people. You cannot conceive how empty, how sad my existence has been these last two years. Like a spectre my feeble hearing appeared to me. I fled humanity, had to be taken for a misanthrope, so far from being one. These changes are wrought by a dear, bewitching little maiden who loves me and whom I love. After years, again a few happy moments, and for the first time I feel that—to marry could make me happy. Unfortuntely she is not of my station. . . . ." And we see darkness returning upon the scene of this emotional drama. His malady grows worse. He seeks the aid of doctors and medicasters; treatments, sound or quack, are of no avail.

His mental depression reaches its culmination in the pathetic testament of Heiligenstadt, October 1802; walled in by silence, he is like one entombed alive. The care of needy relatives adds to his burdens; and when Napoleon's brother Jerome, King of Westphalia, offers him a well-paid position, he is tempted to accept it and go to Cassel. But three of his friends—Archduke Rudolf, Prince Lobkowitz and Count Kinsky—agree to pay him a pension for life in order to attach the first musician of Europe permantly to Vienna. For Beethoven has become an international figure, his fame has spread. Fêted at court and by the nobility, treated with princely lavishness by his friend Lichnowsky, he leads the expensive life of a fashionable and idolized artist. Karl Czerny, pupil of Beethoven, gives this description of the master at work: "While composing, Beethoven tried his music often at the piano, until it suited him, singing all the while. His voice in singing was dreadful." But

sketch-books accompany him everywhere; he composes in the street, on walks through the woods; wherever the musical idea appears to him, he seizes it and puts it on paper, later subjecting it to numberless alterations, to careful development. His summers are spent in the country; his health demands a trip to the baths of Teplitz, in Bohemia. Here the *Hof-Compositeur* van Beethoven meets the "old and incredibly distinguished" *Geheimrat* von Goethe, for whose drama "Egmont" he had written such stirring music. And the composer, pet of princes, seems democratic to the point of rudeness, compared with the artistocratic and affable poet, true friend of the people, who willingly acknowledged in his talks with Eckermann his utter ignorance in matters musical. Beethoven's admiration for Goethe is profound; "he lives, he bids us all to live. That is why one can set him to music. There is nobody so easily set as he; only I am not fond of writing songs." However, conversa-

tion with the deaf musician is made possible only through the aid of note-books that he carries with him everywhere, and into which his interlocutors must write their part of the dialogue. Compassion actuates many a woman's tender heart to show him the utmost kindness and affection. But none of them can or will accept the honor of becoming his wife. In 1812, the year of the Teplitz interview, Beethoven apostrophises himself in his diary: "You are not permitted to be man—not for you, only for others; for you there is no happiness but in yourself, in your Art." Another *rêve passionnel* had been shattered. Which?—there were so many. Beethoven's enigmatic "Immortal Beloved" has her place in Elysium with Petrarca's Laura and Dante's Beatrice.

The year 1814 sees all the statesmen of Europe assembled in Vienna, to sit in high conclave and decide the fate of nations. Archduke Rudolf, in person, introduces his beloved master to the crowned visitors who

bow before him whom Apollo had crowned. Without a work of Beethoven, no program of importance seems complete. He is not wanting publishers: "My compositions bring in much, and I can say that I have more orders than it is possible for me to take care of. For everything I write, I could have six or seven publishers, if I wanted; they no longer bargain with me, I demand and they pay." And yet he feels "more lonesome than ever in this big city." For, after all, it is not the music written with his heart's-blood that the populace is whistling, that publishers are clamoring for, but some of his incidental music to second-rate plays, military marches, "Wellington's Victory at Vittoria," that symphonic poem for which the composer himself "would not give twopence"! But the loneliness, the grief and disillusion, are to bring only riper fruit.

From 1815 to his death, Beethoven did not write nearly as much as he composed in his second, or transitory stage; but what

he created was the result of deeper reflection, of purer and more personal inspiration. His ideals of friendship and his religious devotion finally rise from beneath the sea of conflicting emotions. They form the rocks upon which are built his two greatest works: the Symphony with chorus and the Mass in D. It was given to Beethoven, in spite of so many afflictions, cares and disillusionments, to carry his creative task to a pinnacle which overtowered everything that had gone before.

VII
WEBER

C'est une ère nouvelle que semble soudainement proclamer ce mélos inconnu jusqu'alors, dont la seule *harmonie* est la moelle et l'essence. A l'examen des prodromes et des suites, on y reconnaît la libération à la fois la plus profonde et la plus nette constatable dans l'évolution sonore depuis Monteverdi et avant Claude Debussy.

—*Jean Marnold*

VII

CARL MARIA von WEBER

Weber shares with Schubert the honor of having founded the "romantic" school of music. His influence as a composer, however, has not affected the literature for the piano as much as it has furthered the advancement of orchestral technique. And yet, even in his piano compositions, he was an innovator and proved that he keenly felt the tendencies of his time. These tendencies aimed at freeing the older musical forms from their restrictions, forms which did no longer answer the increasing demand for brilliant virtuosity rather than erudite workmanship, for sensuous melody more than contrapuntal cleverness.

The course which the development of piano music has taken, was not infrequently decided by a composer's personal style of playing, or by his hand as much as by his

ear. While Chopin is perhaps the most pronounced case in point, Weber's early training as a pianist (whose teacher Heuschkel, at Hildburghausen, taught the boy of ten to use his left hand as freely and independently as the right) led him eventually to write more for the virtuoso and the large public than for players of chamber-music and their small but select audience. The classic sonata now became a "Grand Sonata" with plenty of technical fireworks; instead of suites, fugues, inventions and toccatas, we find the significant titles of Romance, Capriccio, Potpourri; and with the "Character Pieces" we revert to the old French Clavecinists and their quaint, imaginative titles, minus the Frenchmen's sober elegance and grace. The Waltz, at first decried as an exhibition of vulgarity, which English travellers, on seeing it danced in Paris at the Tivoli in 1802, pronounced "most shocking," began to oust Gavot and Minuet. Weber's "Invitation to the Dance" con-

ferred upon it civic rights, while Chopin was soon to give it a patent of nobility.

The patriotic fervor of 1813, uniting all Germany in an effort to overthrow Napoleonic rule, inspired Weber to sing in eloquent and stirring music the aspirations of an awakened national consciousness. His settings of words by the gallant soldier-poet Körner literally whipped the people into frenzy. With peace restored, Weber entered upon that part of his work on which his fame is chiefly based—the "romantic" opera. His interest in the instruments of the orchestra—shown by his various compositions for horn, bassoon, clarinet, etc.—had led him to experiment in this domain with the most wonderful success. He was the first musician to discover the "individuality" of certain instruments. His operas, "Der Freischütz," "Euryanthe" and "Oberon"—founded on folklore, mediæval romance and fairy tale—ushered in a new era of dramatic music.

The overtures to these three works are still the show pieces of every virtuoso-orchestra and conductor.

Weber's short life of forty years was spent, from birth to death, in almost constant wanderings. Born December 18, 1786, at Eutin, in Holstein, the son of an eccentric, erratic father, who travelled from town to town as manager of opera-troupes, he was practically brought up in the wings of the stage, or in the lumbering post-coach. When the boy began to show talent and interest for music, his father saw to it that Carl had occasional lessons in piano playing; but not until 1796 did he seriously study. This was when the father's business detained the family for some time at Hildburghausen. The next year the Webers migrated to Salzburg. Here Michael Haydn, younger brother of the great Josef, instructed the boy in harmony and counterpoint. Before the year was over, the youngster published his first opus, consisting in "Six Fughettas."

The next year, 1798, was spent in Munich. Carl studied with the excellent organist and pianist Kalcher. He also became interested in lithography, a process just then discovered by Aloys Senefelder, and learned to print his music as well as to compose it.

The wanderings began again. They led this time to Vienna, the center of all musical life in those days. Weber, however, was not apprenticed to one of the "big men" then living, such as the aged Josef Haydn, or the illustrious Salieri; nor to the struggling Beethoven. Abbé Vogler became his teacher, a man of indubitable, though unbalanced, gifts; he was half scientist, half adventurer, yet of real musical sensitiveness, endowed with an inventive and analytical turn of mind. Weber, in later years, acknowledged unreservedly his indebtedness to Vogler's teaching.

From 1804 to 1806, young Weber was orchestra conductor at the theatre in Breslau, where he had early and ample

opportunity to familiarize himself with orchestral instruments. Prince Eugene of Württemberg, residing most of the time at his Silesian estate, "Carlsruhe," engaged Weber as conductor of his private orchestra. The armies of Napoleon, which were invading Prussia, cut short his stay in Silesia. Prince Eugene joined his regiment in 1807, and sent his private composer to Stuttgart with a recommendation to his brother, Prince Ludwig. Weber became Ludwig's secretary; it was his irksome task to negotiate the affairs of his dissolute and extravagant master, besides having to care for his old and ever more irresponsible parent, whose complicated money matters, in 1810, led to a public scandal, and to the expulsion of father and son from Württemberg "by order of the King." The fugitives went to Mannheim, where Carl found a lifelong friend in Gottfried Weber, an able lawyer and talented musician; and Carl's father

found in Gottfried's house a refuge till he died, in 1812.

Weber now visited Darmstadt, where his teacher Vogler was then residing. In 1811 he returned to Munich, and later went on a concert tour to Switzerland. In 1812, he set out to conquer Berlin, and was most cordially received by public and musicians of the Prussian capital. He entered the employ of the Duke of Gotha, but was soon offered the conductorship of the theatre-orchestra in Prague, a position eagerly accepted, and successfully filled until he followed a call to Dresden, in 1816, where the King of Saxony engaged him "for life" as master of the royal chapel and director of the German opera.

The years in Prague were largely filled with the sound of cannon and with battle-hymns. Still, Weber wrote during that period several operas which gained him a growing surety of touch and mastery of his material. In Dresden his duties at court

called frequently for the composition of cantatas, masses and other music, destined to embellish a royal fête, celebrate a princely wedding, or heighten the impressiveness of a special church function. Weber felt now that he had obtained a secure position, and married the singer Carolina Brand, in November, 1817. He began work on "Der Freischütz," which was first produced in Berlin, on June 18, 1821, and met with instant and unparalleled success. Encouraged by his good fortune, he immediately started on another opera, "Euryanthe," which was written for an enterprising manager at Vienna. The composition progressed only slowly, as it was interrupted by many royal "commands" for one or another occasion. Hence the "*Jubelouvertüre*," "*Festmusik*," "*Huldigungscantate*," and more works of that nature. Finally, "Euryanthe" was given its first performance at Vienna, on October 25, 1823. The next day the composer wrote to his wife: "My reception,

when I appeared in the orchestra, was the most enthusiastic and brilliant that one could imagine. There was no end to it." Yet, the playing and singing, on that occasion, is said to have been not without faults. At its first hearing in Berlin, the following year, the overture fell flat.

Weber's constitution had never been strong; his unstable mode of life had not improved it; now his health began to fail rapidly. He was honored by a commission from London to write an opera for Covent Garden. As subject he was to take "Faust" or "Oberon"; he chose the latter. Working with feverish ardor, he completed the opera in a short time. "Oberon," in spite of its involved libretto, was politely acclaimed when London heard it for the first time on April 12, 1826, conducted by the ailing composer in person. Greatly enfeebled by his exertions and his journey, Weber passed away in the night of June 5, 1826. He was buried in England; but eighteen years later

his ashes were transferred to Dresden. The solemn memorial services were directed by the young conductor of the Dresden orchestra, who was none other than Richard Wagner. It was a momentous day in the history of German music, when the heir to Weber's genius paid homage to his great precursor's glory!

VIII
SCHUBERT

Ich singe wie der Vogel singt,
Der in den Zweigen wohnet.

—*J. W. von Goethe*

VIII

FRANZ PETER SCHUBERT

Considering the difference between the works of Beethoven and Schubert, it is difficult to believe that they were contemporaries and that the younger of the two, born twenty-seven years after Beethoven, survived the older master only by twenty months. The whole period of Schubert's creative activity does not extend over more than sixteen years; and when he died, at the age of thirty-one—an age at which other mortals have hardly begun their lifework—he left not only an astoundingly large number of compositions, but by the very quality and nature of these compositions he had sounded a new note in music that was to herald the dawn of "romanticism."

The origin of Schubert, born January 31, 1797, the son of a poor schoolteacher, and the circumstances in which the boy was

brought up, may not have been altogether without influence upon the "romantic" character of his music. Schubert was the first among the great masters living at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who were not either born within the purlieus of a palace or reared under the patronage of a court, secular or churchly. His family was of common stock, and his life passed in surroundings of plain and simple "homeliness." No king or kaiser, much less a music-publisher, encouraged his beginnings with commissions. What he wrote, he composed spontaneously, spurred by the extraordinary fertility of his genius, and with an ear bent rather to the song of the people than to the favorite distraction of princes. It is not insignificant that Schubert should have written so many waltzes, *écossaises* (schottisches), polonaises, *Ländler* (country-dances), and *Singspiele* (operettas), and that a great number of his songs early achieved a "popular" success. Nor is it surprising that he excelled

particularly as a writer of songs and became the originator of the modern "*Lied.*"

The fructifying influence of one art on another is constantly in evidence, though the rôles are often interchanged. Schubert found vital inspiration in the wonderful song-literature that German poets like Goethe, Kerner, Rückert, Möricke, Eichendorff, and young Heinrich Heine, had brought to an unprecedented height. The "romanticism" of poetry was transplanted into music. And there are several reasons why Schubert should have been responsible for the transplanting. First of all, his sensitive nature, his love for poetry, his kinship with a movement that was breaking away from a stiff and academic classicism, become stale and arid, caused him to embrace with open arms this "new" creed which forsook the gods of Greece and Rome for the nymphs of native rivers and familiar woodland fairies; which replaced the "refined" and "pompous" speech of a declining century of autocrats

with the more natural expressions of simple human sentiments, voiced and understood by people who had, directly or indirectly, tasted of revolution and democracy. The second reason may be found in the fact that Schubert was practically self-taught, as far as composition was concerned, and that his sense of musical shape, or his "architectural" ability, had not been sufficiently developed. Therefore his longer compositions are not always free from lengthy repetitions and fillings that a more disciplined appreciation of form might have avoided. But the short, strophic, song-text was the ideal basis upon which to build his little masterpieces; and, in the course of time, the knowledge gained in the setting of "Lieder" benefited him greatly in the construction of his shorter instrumental numbers. Schubert's unerring power of musical characterization, on the other hand, his "lyricism," inborn and unexcelled, enabled him to choose poems of widely divergent styles, and to set them

all, with very few exceptions, to a music which to this day has lost nothing of its dramatic life or enchanting melodic appeal. Full of harmonic innovations, of modulatory departures that still retain the zest of modernity, his songs, his piano-pieces, his chamber-music, immortal strains from his symphonic compositions—this wealth of originality makes one wonder what the world lost in his premature death.

The story of Schubert's life is all too brief, nor is it marked by any events that add to it high lights. Born in a suburb of Vienna, the semi-rural surroundings of his infancy always attracted him. Having given proof of precocious musical talent, and being endowed with a pleasing voice, he became a choirboy when eight years old, and in 1808 he was admitted into the choir of the imperial chapel. He received his education at an institution connected with the choir, where his principal music-teacher was Antonio Salieri, director of the imperial

opera and chapel, at one time teacher of Beethoven, a polite courtier and polished mediocrity, who when young had enjoyed the friendship of Gluck, and now only enjoys the doubtful distinction of being known as Mozart's jealous and intriguing enemy. But Schubert could learn very little from a musical style that lacked in the essentials of life and truth. His keen sense of harmonic possibilities, his beautiful discoveries in the field of enharmonic modulation, soon taught him to follow his own paths. He left the choir in 1813, and next year became assistant to his father, the schoolmaster. Of figure stubby and thickset, not overcareful in his dress, given to the convivial pleasures of pot and glass, he was at heart an Arcadian.

After three years of teaching, he decided to devote his entire time to composition. Several of his earliest and finest songs had attracted considerable attention, and Schubert hoped that he would find the same

appreciation for his bigger instrumental works. But therein he was to be cruelly undeceived. Ambitious to try his hand at larger forms, he wrote symphony after symphony, and selected, with rare lack of discrimination, one unpractical or ineffective opera-libretto after another. Interspersed between these more voluminous works are the songs (numbering about six hundred in all), many of which were written at a moment's inspiration upon the first reading of the text; others, like his famous setting of Goethe's "Erlking," were the outcome of various sketches, discarded or painstakingly rewritten.

An observation made by a discerning English amateur, at London, in 1833, is of interest: "At Mr. Wessel's German soirée I heard some songs by Shobert [*sic*], a new author. His 'Erl King,' sung by Mme. Schroeder, and accompanied on the pianoforte by Mme. Dulken, certainly was a most terrific thing of its kind. The alarm-

ing intonation of the vocalist, and the awful thunder which the pianist threw into the bass, had a dramatic effect purely German." And yet the accompanist, that evening, was among the best of her time; the singer, among the greatest of all times. What would the Englishman have said to Schubert's "Der Atlas," or "Gruppe aus dem Tartarus," or any of the other grand and "terrific" songs so studiously avoided by our timid program-makers?

Schubert's charming, songful piano music, the shorter pieces in particular, furnished the direct pattern of Mendelssohn's "Songs without Words," and of Schumann's "Novellettes"; and his "Hungarian Divertissement," composed during his stay in Hungary in 1818 as music-teacher in the family of Count Johann Esterhazy, was, in a way, the model for the many "Rhapsodies," Hungarian or of other national flavors, that were to follow him. He vainly tried to obtain employment worthy of his talents. Pursued by ill luck,

plagued by failing health, ignored by the distributors of lucrative positions, making but a meagre living, he was at least blessed with a few faithful friends and staunch believers in his greatness, and he had the satisfaction of one public appearance, in the Spring of 1828, at a successful concert devoted to his own compositions.

But "the Wanderer" was preparing to leave again. The parting hour was near. Thus has Sir George Grove set down the last moments: "Schubert, turning round, clutched at the wall with his poor, tired hands, and said in a slow, earnest voice, 'Here, here is my end.' At three in the afternoon of Wednesday, November 19, 1828, he breathed his last, and his simple, earnest soul took its flight from the world. There never has been one like him, and there will never be another."

IX

BERLIOZ

Berlioz' Notenzeichen sind im Klavierauszuge eingetrocknete Mumien, dagegen gemahnen die Partituren dieses Meisters an die Zauberbücher des Prosper Alpanus im Klein Zaches, darin Kopf und Hals, Punkte, Pausen, Notenschlüssel und Taktstriche ein geisterhaftes Leben führen.

—*Hugo Wolf*

IX

HECTOR BERLIOZ

Berlioz left a detailed account of his life, begun in 1848 at London, and carried down to New Year's Day of 1865. We also have much of his personal correspondence. Letters and autobiographies are perhaps the most interesting part of literature. But autobiographies are not always trustworthy documents. Only a few are the calm, enlightened review of facts, the dispassionate probing into causes and effects, the entertaining and instructive painting of characters and customs which are no more. Frequently, such accounts are intended as apologies or glorifications of the writer, and as posthumous attacks upon dead adversaries. The Memoirs of Berlioz suffer from this fault to a not inconsiderable, but highly excusable, degree. Godlike as were his aspirations, his soul was human; he was

misunderstood and maligned in his youth, grew old in disappointment and vexation. He had the morbid need of self-revealment. That he should have used the pen so extensively, and often caustically, in his own defence, is but natural; nor is it to be regretted by posterity, for his pen was brilliant.

Hector Berlioz was born December 11, 1803, at Côte-Saint-André, a small place near Lyons, in the south of France. His father was a physician, intelligent and broad-minded, absorbed in his profession. His mother was a fanatic and intolerant Catholic. Berlioz was ever a victim of his shortcomings, which were the result of parental short-sightedness. Although he did not fail to give early signs of musical talent and temperamental impulsiveness, his technical training and moral discipline were vague and ineffective. He learned to play the flute and guitar, after a fashion, and was brought up with the idea that he should end an honorable country doctor.

He was sent to Paris to study medicine. The French capital, in the first half of the nineteenth century, was still reverberating with the clangor of the revolution and the wars of Bonaparte. New governments followed each other in quick succession. Revolutionary and bellicose was the romantic spirit that possessed the literary and artistic generation of the day. Young Berlioz, ardent and exalted, was suddenly brought face to face with a realization of his secret dreams. He was swept off his feet. Having drunk from the pure essence of Gluck, Beethoven and Weber, he could no longer stand the heavy atmosphere of the dissecting room. He discarded his books on anatomy and pathology for treatises on harmony and counterpoint.

Berlioz was twenty-two years old when he entered the Paris Conservatory and became a pupil of Reicha, after having taken a few lessons from Lesueur. Conspicuous in dress and manners, his fine head

crowned with a leonine crop of hair that quivered like aspen leaves at his impassionate gestures, he could not help attracting the attention of every one. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of his father, and the actual curses of his bigoted mother, to whom music was an agent of the devil, he pursued his studies. He suffered want, earning a pittance by singing in the chorus of a third-rate theatre, and contracted debts in order to perform the works he was now beginning to compose. These works inflamed the younger and progressive element with wild enthusiasm; they scandalized the fogies. Fétis, the studious musicographer and Berlioz's lifelong enemy, wrote in 1835, after some of the composer's greatest and most magnificent orchestral pieces had already been heard in public: "According to my belief, the things that M. Berlioz writes do not belong to what I am accustomed to consider as music, and I am absolutely certain that the conditions of this art are unknown to him."

Fétis saw only the flaws, and was blind to the light of genius. But flaws there were, and even Schumann, who had been the loud and staunch defender of the younger Berlioz, could write in later years to the historian Ambros: "Time makes us severer. In some of Berlioz's recent works there are things which one can't forgive a man of forty."

With due allowance made for such blemishes, there remains the work of a giant, an innovator, without whom music would have lost much that was fructifying; there remain the vast conceptions of an inspired brain, hewed in large masses of tone; there remain, above all, the creation of the modern orchestra and the establishing of the "program" symphony, two things which his contemporaries and successors eagerly appropriated. Heine called him "the lark with eagle wings."

Only after several attempts did he succeed, in December, 1830, in winning the

Rome Prize with a cantata sufficiently academic in style to pass the judges. This was three years after his first great emotional crisis, brought on by an Irish actress, Harriet Smithson, who gave English performances of Shakespeare in Paris. Berlioz greatly admired Shakespeare, as he did Goethe and Byron. He lost his head completely over his Ophelia, walking the streets day and night like one demented. A *grande passion* was essential to his nature, and to accelerate creation nothing served him so well as love fulfilled or unrequited. The inapproachable Miss had passed from the scene, however, when Berlioz set out for his sojourn in the Eternal City, as a pensioner of the French Government. It was then Marie (Camille) Mocke, a youthful and coquettish pianist, who had captivated his heart. He tore himself away and arrived at the Villa Médicis about the middle of March, 1831.

When by the first of April he was still without word from Marie, he fled from Rome

and got as far as Florence, where he fell ill. Upon learning that Marie had meanwhile married M. Pleyel, he swore vengeance, meditated the murder of the faithless one, and instantly proceeded on his homicidal errand. But he had a timely change of mind, was conscience-stricken, simulated an attempt at suicide, wrote to Horace Vernet —the director of the Villa Médicis—and received a paternal and forgiving answer. He returned to Rome, but never liked the city very much. In 1832 he left the Villa, not without having made love to Vernet's daughter, for whose hand he asked Madame Vernet in a letter dispatched as soon as he arrived in Paris.

But here an unexpected discovery gave events a different turn. He found that Harriet Smithson was again in town, and the old fire flamed up more violently than ever. Not with ordinary wooing did he want to win her, but by the impact with his "Fantastic Symphony" (first performed in December,

1830, and then revised), a tremendous work for those days, and reflecting with dramatic vividness the emotions—real and imagined—that his love for Harriet had awakened. Miss Smithson heard the symphony at a concert on December 9, 1832. The composer's magnetic personality, the impression produced by his remarkable work on an audience which, though it contained enough hostile reactionaries, gave overwhelming signs of its admiration, combined to achieve the desired effect. After parental objections were overridden, the marriage finally took place on October 3, 1833. It was not a happy union. The wife grew more and more jealous, the husband disillusioned. Conditions became intolerable and a separation followed. In 1843, after so many artistic, pecuniary and domestic misadventures, Berlioz left Paris for a concert tour through Germany, Austria and Russia. He was accorded everywhere the warm and intelli-

gent reception that his compatriots had refused him.

Liszt, in particular, espoused his cause and performed his works when called to direct the musical affairs of Weimar. His operas were heard in Germany before France knew them. But it is not as an opera composer that Berlioz excelled. Neither the Shakespearean "Beatrice and Benedict" nor the romantic "Benvenuto Cellini" have found a permanent place in the operatic repertory. "The Trojans," suggested by Virgil's tale of Æneas, fared no better. The dramatic symphony "Romeo and Juliet" (1839) constituted a departure; as novel as the form, as characteristic are the contents of this splendid work. All things considered, it ranks perhaps highest among the composer's creations. His early reading had furnished the inspirational germ for most of his later compositions. Shakespearean was the subject for the overture "King Lear," for the orchestral fantasy "The

Tempest." We find Byron's glowing flame in the symphonic poem "Harold in Italy" (1834) and the "Corsair" overture. Goethe is responsible for "The Damnation of Faust" (1846), the work that did most to earn the composer posthumous laurels.

Berlioz, a child of his age, was chivalrous. When Harriet was dying in 1854, his affection for her was still alive. As he had sung his love in his "Fantastic Symphony," where the obsessing idea of the beloved had taken musical shape in an equally obsessing theme—the first true specimen of the *Leitmotiv*—so did he mourn for her in his funeral music of Ophelia. Death, in the soul-searching days of romanticism, was a solemn and spectacular thing. No one represented it more dramatically than did Berlioz in his Requiem Mass (1837). It is, with the "Fantastic Symphony," Berlioz's most astonishing achievement in orchestral technique. His instinct for unusual and graphic instrumentation was infallible. His treatise on the

instruments of the orchestra is the work of a shrewd analyst, deft craftsman and sensitive poet.

Berlioz had found, early in life, that his literary and critical gifts were more dependable breadwinners than was his musical genius. As a critic on several newspapers, notably *Le Journal des Débats*, which he joined in 1838, he became a power and a sort of oracle. He did not hesitate to avow his antipathy to Wagner. Seldom did he set down anything but his candid opinion. He never used his influence for selfish ends. His sharp wit, his enlightening observations, make good reading in a day when most of the works and persons that formed the objects of his criticisms live only by the praise or censure he bestowed on them. Having survived a second wife, having buried a son of his first marriage, and also his sister, he was left solitary, a prey to his dejected moods. He died on March 8,

1869. A grand and pathetic figure was this hyper-emotional dreamer and combative originator.

X
MENDELSSOHN

Whatever be the reason, it is commonly observed that the early writers are in possession of nature, and their followers of art; that the first excel in strength and invention, and the latter in elegance and refinement.

—*Dr. Samuel Johnson*

X

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

The lives of so many great composers are one long record of struggle, poverty, and disappointment, that Felix Mendelssohn's career would be remarkable if for no other reason than the advantages, the affluence and the success which he enjoyed during his lifetime. His family was Jewish, and of humblest origin. His grandfather, the eminent philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, when young, had still to suffer under the humiliating restrictions which, until the end of the eighteenth century, actually segregated all Jews in the towns of Europe from the normal life of the community. This sage and emancipator gradually conquered the prejudices of the Christians and the bigotry of his own people; he made a position for himself in German literature, was the close friend of the poet and dramatist Lessing, and practically

opened to his race the door that gave it access into modern society. Abraham (the second son of Moses and father of Felix), who later in his life said laughingly: "When a boy, I was known as the son of my father; now I am known as the father of my son!" possessed qualities which, though peculiarly Jewish, entitle him to not a little of the glory that distinguished the Mendelssohn family; and these qualities were precisely those of an excellent son and an ideal father.

Abraham was clerk in the banking house of Fould in Paris, when he married Lea Salomon, the daughter of a rich merchant in Hamburg. He became associated with his elder brother, who conducted a banking and brokerage business in Hamburg. It was the time of the Napoleonic invasion. War means the destruction of much property; it is also the germ of new fortunes. Abraham settled with his family in Berlin, in 1811; he was a shrewd business man, and the banking house which he founded is still in existence, and is

still conducted by his descendants. Abraham made excellent use of his riches in cultivating arts and letters, which had played such great part in the life of his father. His tastes were shared by his wife, a gifted musician, who spoke several languages, and read the old Greek and Latin authors in the original.

It was into this atmosphere of ease and culture that Felix was born at Hamburg, February 3, 1809. Both he and his sister Fanny, four years his elder, showed early signs of great musical talent. Their mother gave them their first music-lessons; but soon they were ready to receive instruction from the best teachers that the father's money could procure. C. F. Zelter, the friend of Goethe, was chosen to teach Felix composition. The boy made wonderful progress. In the art-loving home of the Mendelssohns, all musicians and artists of renown that lived in or passed through Berlin, convened for the famous Sunday evening concerts, the

program containing always one or more compositions by the young prodigy. In 1821, Zelter took Felix on a visit to Goethe, at Weimar, where the boy played and extemporized to the great delight of the Grand Old Man. Felix had inherited his grandfather's gift of expression, and the letters of his youth already give vivid accounts of his experiences. Throughout his life he kept up a lively correspondence with his relatives and friends, which makes excellent and improving reading.

Abraham took his son to Paris in 1825, and asked Cherubini's advice whether or not the boy should continue to pursue a musical profession. Cherubini left no doubt in the father's mind, if any there was, but Abraham would not consent to leaving his son with Cherubini in Paris, and took him back to Berlin, where he kept him under his parental guidance and authority.

In 1826, Felix wrote the overture to Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream,"

a work which discloses the full ripeness of his musical genius. His first larger opera was performed in Berlin, in 1827, but owing to a poor libretto it had only mediocre success. Intrigues at the opera house added to the young man's annoyance, and the incident was the beginning of a distinct dislike that Mendelssohn felt ever after for Berlin. During his musical studies he had become engrossed in the works of Handel and Bach, then hardly known by the general public. It is not one of Mendelssohn's smallest merits to have rediscovered these works; and his performance of Bach's music for the "Passion according to St. Matthew" on March 11, 1829, at Berlin, will ever remain a memorable date in the history of music.

Sent by his father, who always acted as his son's adviser, he travelled to Switzerland and Italy, to France, and in 1829 to England, where he achieved triumphs as pianist, composer and conductor. He visited

England nine times, and travelled through Scotland and Ireland, finding inspiration wherever he went—witness his "Italian Symphony," "Scotch Symphony," "Venetian Gondolier Songs," "Hebrides" overture, "Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage," and so many other compositions. His famous "Songs without Words" were really sketches of a traveller, written for the delectation of those who had stayed at home. They may have the slightness of such sketches, but they also have the vividness of indelible impressions made on a sensitive and cultured mind, and are drawn with infinite charm and grace.

Mendelssohn acted as conductor at various musical festivals, and spent a short time as musical director in Düsseldorf, where his oratorio "St. Paul" was brought out in 1836. Like his brother and his two sisters, he was brought up in the Christian religion, and in 1837 married the daughter of a Protestant clergyman. His appointment as

conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus orchestra, in 1835, had given him at last a position worthy of his extraordinary talents. His influence made Leipzig the center of musical life in Germany; his founding of the Leipzig Conservatory of Music, in 1843, created an institution which long remained a model of its kind. On his last visit to England, in 1846, he produced at Birmingham his oratorio "Elijah."

On his return to Leipzig, he began to feel the effect of overwork; he resigned the conductorship of the orchestra. The death of his beloved sister Fanny broke his heart; he passed away November 4, 1847.

Only at the end of his days did Felix Mendelssohn learn to know the sorrow of bereavement and the tragedy of human helplessness. But then it was too late for him to voice his grief in tones. As his life was full of sunshine, so is his music; the overpowering, elemental note is missing even in his largest works. He was a classicist

by education, and a romanticist through contagion. Weber's music decidedly influenced him. Fairy tale and folklore attracted him as much as it had the older master. Hence his music for a "Midsummer Night's Dream," for Goethe's "The First Walpurgis Night," the fragments of an opera "The Loreley," and his overture "The Lovely Melusine." He wrote several choral works besides his two oratorios, much chamber-music, and a violin concerto that is especially noteworthy. All of his music bears the stamp of refinement, the glitter and opulence of the surroundings that made his short life an unusually active and happy one.

XI
CHOPIN

Then were celestial harpings heard, not in full symphony, as those by which the spheres are tutored; but, as loudest instruments on earth speak oftentimes, muffled; so to accommodate their sound the better to the weak ears of the imperfect-born.

—*Charles Lamb*

XI

FRÉDÉRIC CHOPIN

The path of Chopin's life may be retraced with a few strokes; no words can adequately describe the magic of his music. And yet, much has been written about it by masters of the sonorous phrase, by cavilling critics or fanatic worshippers—often extravagantly, never impassively! Nor was it only after death that man and work were paid their due, although the masses, ever attracted by obvious virtuosity, could not have been expected to prefer the seer of strange and novel beauty to his shallow contemporaries, much as it disappointed the hypersensitive and morbid artist. But it was honor, indeed, to be hailed by a Schumann as "the boldest, proudest poet-soul of his time," and pardonable, perhaps, in a disillusioned, self-centered mind not to return the greeting; it was sweet

to receive fervent homage from the fairest, and gratifying to enjoy the friendship of the greatest among kindred spirits.

Chopin was born February 22, 1810, in a village not far from Warsaw, the capital of Poland. His father taught at a school which was frequented by children of the Polish aristocracy, and where young Frédéric formed many blackboard acquaintances that ripened into pleasant connections of helpful influence on his future. The boy's musical talents became apparent at an early age. The teacher who did most for their development was Joseph Elsner (1769-1854), a man of sound intelligence and taste. Chopin soon gained a reputation as a finished pianist and a composer of distinction. However, fame could be bought only in the cosmopolitan music marts of Europe. He visited Berlin in 1828; in the following year he went to Vienna, where he played successfully in public. He returned to Warsaw by way of Prague, Dresden and Breslau,

widening everywhere his circle of musical relations. In November, 1830, Chopin set out for a second visit to Vienna. But the Viennese public did not quicken to the charms of his touch as it had done in 1829. More boisterous players had ensnared it. To the disillusionment of the musician was added that of the patriot who saw another of the periodic Polish revolutions, an attempt in December, 1830, to shake off Russia's yoke, finally and dismally collapse before the overwhelming armies of the Czar. He decided to try his luck in England, started on his way to Munich, and arrived at Paris in October, 1831. Here he remained, with few and short interruptions, for the rest of his life.

The Paris of 1831 was the gathering place of illustrious men and women, the caldron in which new creeds of art and politics fermented. The democratic monarchy of Louis-Philippe, King by the grace of the "July revolt" of 1830 and deposed by the

"February insurrection" of 1848, offered shelter to a large number of political refugees from other countries. Chopin, who was never to return to Poland, found here many of his compatriots and intimate friends. His ardent love for the Polish fatherland, the melancholy fate of the exiled, are voiced in some of the most chivalrous and lofty pages of his music, as well as in some of the tenderest and saddest. His aspirations and dreams, his sorrow and grief, were shared by the nobility of blood and brain that welcomed in him a precious addition to their colony. It is not surprising that he should have been drawn to Heine, likewise an exile, whose warm lyricism and icy wit formed such an incomparable combination. The parallel between the musician and the poet is unavoidable; it sounds the tonic triad in the gamut of their emotions: homesick, lovesick, soulsick.

Chopin gave his first recital in Paris under the auspices of the publisher and

piano manufacturer Camille Pleyel; from the "slightly veiled, yet silvery sonorousness" of whose instrument he drew sounds such as had not been heard before. After 1835, he appeared but seldom in public. He devoted his time to composing and teaching. The majority of Chopin's compositions were written in Paris and during the summers that he spent at Nohant, the country-seat of that extraordinary woman who wrote under the pen-name of "George Sand" and who made a specialty of gleaning the material for her romances from personal experience. They met in 1837 and parted ten years later. Soon after his arrival in Paris, Chopin, in order to make a living, had settled down to a routine of teaching, and numerous were the pupils who came to take lessons from this pale young man of languid airs, of faultless manners and attire, succumbing each and all to their teacher's irresistible fascination, many of them loyal in their cult for him unto the end, like that

privileged Miss Stirling who sent him from Edinburgh twenty thousand francs when she heard the ailing master was in need; like the Countess Delphine Potocka who rushed from Nice to his deathbed, and—we are told—brightened his last hours with her singing; like Adolph Gutmann—one of his favorite pupils, to whom the C♯ minor Scherzo was inscribed—in whose arms he is said to have expired, after so much physical and mental suffering.

The seductive grace that distinguishes many of Chopin's compositions, the often painful languor which he puts into a melody, the incisiveness that he imparts to a rhythm, account for the present hold of his music on all the world, including the unmusical half. What the musician never tires of admiring in this remarkable innovator—ranking as such with Bach, Wagner and Debussy—is the keenness of his divining ear, the surety of his revealing fingers. Chopin wrote practically only for the piano, the real

possibilities of which he was the first to discover. Under his hands the instrument ceased to be a mechanism of "percussion." The "Hammerclavier" was taught subjection to his varying moods of passion, tenderness or playful irony; of anger, simple loveliness, or gloom; from the keyboard he drew the brilliant glare of trumpets or the throb of muffled drums; but he always had regard for "musical sonority," for harmonious distribution of chord and arpeggio, and proved that even little "hammers" were intended—first and last—to sing! The shimmering iridescence of his chromaticism—harmonic as well as melodic—is Chopin's greatest gift to music; he tapped a source that has not been exhausted to this day. The pearly sinuosities of his runs, his filigree of dazzling arabesques, inaugurated a new era in musical "embellishments." Peculiar to his music was the style of his performance: that flexibility of "tempo rubato," almost imperceptible and

indefinable, yet so essential and so telling.

Each new mode of musical expression demands a special and fitting manner of rendition to become articulate. What applies to the difference of orchestral technique in Mozart, Berlioz and Stravinsky, is equally true of the piano styles of Chopin, Debussy and the later Scriabin, fundamentally related though the three may be. Schumann had said of the "Préludes," after praising them loudly: "The Philistines must keep away." But Ignaz Moscheles, musical middle-man, disregarded the warning, and wrote, upon having become acquainted with Chopin's compositions: "I am charmed with their originality, and the national colouring of his subjects. My thoughts, however, and through them my fingers, stumble at certain hard, inartistic, and to me inconceivable modulations. On the whole I find his music too sweet, not manly enough, and hardly the work of a profound musician." Thus the value of contemporary musical

criticism, based on "retarded hearing," remains forever patent. Moscheles corrected himself later (1839) in a description of Chopin's person and playing: "His appearance completely resembles his music—they are both delicate and dreamy. He played to me, in compliance with my request, and I now for the first time understand his music, and all the raptures of the ladies' world become intelligible. The *ad libitum* playing, which in the hand of other interpreters of his music degenerates into a constant uncertainty of rhythm, is with him an element of exquisite originality; the hard, inartistic [!] modulations, so like those of a *dilettante*—which I never can manage when playing Chopin's music—cease to shock me, for he glides over them almost imperceptibly with his elfish fingers. His soft playing being a mere breath, he requires no powerful *forte* to produce the desired contrasts.—He played me some of his Études, and his latest work, 'Préludes.'—Chopin's

excellent pupil Gutmann played his manuscript Scherzo in C-sharp minor, Chopin himself his manuscript Sonata in B-flat minor, with the Funeral March."

Nervously high-strung, physically weak, Chopin had no reserve power to fight consumption when it attacked his lungs. On the return from a visit to England, during the winter of 1848-49, his condition grew rapidly worse. He became so feeble that he could no longer walk. He died in Paris, in the early morning of October 17, 1849. And now let Liszt, that great and generous musician, the friend of Chopin, give you his version of the end:

"The final agony commenced about two o'clock; a cold sweat ran profusely from his brow; after a short drowsiness, he asked, in a voice scarcely audible: 'Who is near me?' Being answered, he bent his head to kiss the hand of M. Gutmann, who still supported it;—while giving this last tender

proof of love and gratitude, the soul of the artist left its fragile clay. He died as he had lived—in loving."

XII
SCHUMANN

It is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art; and the desire of beauty being a fixed element in every artistic organization, it is the addition of curiosity to this desire of beauty that constitutes the romantic temper.

—*Walter Pater*

XII

ROBERT SCHUMANN

Out of the skies of poetry the spirit of "romanticism" had descended upon music at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and musicians went forth to preach, in a universal tongue, the evangel of Goethe and Heine, of Byron, Lamartine and Victor Hugo. The age of chivalry seemed to have returned, bringing with it new troubadours to praise high deeds of manly prowess and sing the charms and virtues of fair women. The mysticism of pious knights and militant monks took the form of a pagan love for nature's hidden beauties. Music was no longer satisfied with giving puerile imitations of bird calls, babbling brooks and rumbling thunder. The secret wonders of night, the conquering advent of spring, the grandeur of mountain and sea, found expression in tones. And as this could be done by im-

plication only, by a suggestion of mood rather than pictorial preciseness, that quality of the human mind known as imagination became paramount with the composer and indispensable to the interpreter of music. Romanticism is fancy freed from the bounds of convention and reason, is the lure of exploring unexplorable realms that border on the confines of madness, where E. T. A. Hoffmann, the spinner of fantastic tales, and Robert Schumann, the musician of the "Fantasiestücke," penetrated farthest and were lost.

Schumann was born June 8, 1810, at Zwickau in Saxony, the youngest son of his parents. His father was a bookseller, a man of good literary taste. We may assume that in the home of the Schumanns bookish questions were frequently discussed, that "best sellers" and startling novelties were often mentioned, and that thereby the interest in Robert was awakened for that new movement in poetry and fiction which

was holding the reading public of Europe in its grip. The boy received the higher school education necessary for entering a university. He began to compose music when he was seven years old, and learned to play the piano. But his musical preoccupations were not permitted to interfere with the course of his humanistic studies. He was admitted to the University of Leipzig in 1828, and attended lectures on law, philosophy and literature. Following the ancient custom of continental scholars to go from one college to another, in order to choose the best teachers and most congenial surroundings, Schumann went to Heidelberg in 1829. The lovely old town on the banks of the Neckar with its wooded hills, crowned by a famous ruin, was just the place for this impressionable youth. Meanwhile he had not neglected his music, and when he returned to Leipzig, in the following year, he decided to prepare himself for the career of a concert pianist under the tuition

of Fr. Wieck, whose house became his second home. But certain methods which he employed in order to hasten technical progress proved harmful to his hands, and he had to abandon his plans. Composition now became his main occupation, together with literary work, especially musical criticism. Schumann founded a review which rendered important service in directing public taste and in paving the way for new composers. It was he who first called attention in Germany to the music of Chopin, and twenty years later saluted young Brahms as a rising genius. In 1840, Schumann married Clara Wieck, daughter of his teacher, herself an eminent pianist who became the ideal performer of her husband's music. From this period date the songs that make Schumann one of the first lyric tone-poets of all times. To name the finest, one would have to name them nearly all; to mention but the strangest and least known, one might point

to "Im Zwielicht" and "Auf einer alten Burg."

Clara was ever the faithful watcher and intelligent ministrant, wife and artist. Her family life was burdened with many griefs. But she shared to the fullest Robert's ecstatic joys of creation. When he was at work on his Symphony in D minor, she made this entry in her diary under the date of May 31, 1841: "Robert began yesterday another symphony, which will be in one movement, and yet contain an adagio and a finale. I have heard nothing about it, yet I see Robert's bustle, and I hear the D minor sounding wildly from a distance, so that I know in advance that another work will be fashioned in the depths of his soul. Heaven is kindly disposed toward us: Robert cannot be happier in the composition than I am when he shows me such a work."

In 1843 Schumann was invited by Mendelssohn to join the faculty of the newly founded conservatory in Leipzig, but his

stay was a short one. He toured Russia in company with his wife, in 1844, and in the autumn of the same year settled in Dresden. He preferred the comparative quiet of this place: "This suits my condition, for I still suffer very much from my nerves." Here he remained until 1850, when he was called to Düsseldorf as municipal director of music. Three years later, the wonderful brain that had fashioned so many gems of the purest water, became clouded, and final darkness slowly settled around him who had sent so much light into the world. His attacks of mental depression dated from about his twenty-fifth year; they grew steadily worse, and when he attempted to commit suicide by jumping into the Rhine in February, 1854, his condition had to be acknowledged hopeless. He was placed in an asylum at Endenich, near Bonn on the Rhine, where he died July 29, 1856.

Schumann the dreamer, the visionary, the chivalrous champion, the poet, sang

with a voice that reflected all the delicate musings and imaginings of his mind. Whimsical or tender, brilliant or simple, shy or exuberant—his music is always expressive, his characterization infallible. Labelled in fanciful manner, his piano pieces—not less than his songs—always tell their story, if properly retold! Exquisite miniaturist in his "Scenes of Childhood," etcher of opulent light and shade in his "Carnival," "Kreisleriana" and "Novellettes," wielder of larger brushes in his remarkable piano concerto, he wrote for the instrument what may justly be called the most picturesque, the most romantic, of all romantic music.

A fresh gust, freighted with all the scents of May, was blowing through the grove of Music. Birdlings were tuning up in a soaring treble, to the *basso ostinato* of croaking frogs. Let us ponder what Moscheles, the pedantic pianist and malicious diarist, wrote in 1850, after hearing Schumann's opera "Genoveva": "There is a want of intelligible,

flowing, rhythmical melody; I am one of Schumann's worshippers, but cannot conceal from myself this weakness. We applauded enthusiastically, and called him forward at the end, but there was not a single 'encore'."

Schumann was never intended for an opera composer. But "want of melody" was certainly not his!

In 1853, reviewing the trend of the times, as it were, Moscheles had this to say: "Brahms' compositions are of a really elevated character, and Schumann, whom he has chosen as a model, recommends him as the 'Messiah of Music.' I find him, like Schumann, often piquant, but occasionally too labored. Even Beethoven's music was objected to, people say, when it first appeared, as being too far-fetched, and difficult to understand. True it is that Beethoven's genius lured him away to paths never trodden before, which are not accessible to everyone, and yet since that time it has been proved that he not only sought but found what he

wished to express in music. Let us hope that this also may be the lot of the younger composers. Brahms' technical powers, his reading from sight, do him and his teacher, Eduard Marxsen, great credit.—I have heard a good deal of Berlioz, and give him my closest attention. My opinion of his music remains unshaken, I acknowledge his merit, but cannot always understand him—or is such music as the 'Witches' Sabbath' not meant to be understood? Curious—one now listens again with pleasure to the simple opera, 'Doctor and Apothecary,' by Dittersdorf; one forgets how Rossini in his 'Tell,' and Meyerbeer in his 'Roberto,' have crammed us with their loaded instrumentation and scenic effects, and how Wagner has gone beyond both. *Les extrêmes se touchent.*"

But what if there be no extremes in music, save those of boredom and sterility?

XIII
LISZT

It is by art and religion that men have always sought rest. Art is a world of man's own making, in which he finds harmonious development. Religion is the anodyne cup—indeed of our own blood—at which we slake our thirst when our hearts are torn by personal misery, or weary and distracted by life's heat and restless hurry.

—*Havelock Ellis*

XIII

FRANZ LISZT

What the Romans meant by *vates*—divinely inspired singer and prophet, leader in his chosen art—such was Liszt. As these ancient magi were believed to hold communion with the supernatural, only so could a world that was fortunate enough to live under the spell of Liszt's piano playing, explain his wizardry. Legend has taken possession of him; as he was worshipped in the living person, so has his memory become a veritable cult, with the obligatory rites and relics. We can but regret that his day did not know the uncanny "recording" appliances of our own. If his performance is receding more and more to the dim region of fable, the greatness of his heart and the true originality of his music are shining in ever-growing brightness. As a character and a composer, posterity is beginning to

judge him more fairly than did his contemporaries, who could not do sufficient honor to the eccentric virtuoso.

The life of Liszt was brilliant, spectacular. Drab words can give only a glimpse of it. A youth, portrayed by the music-mad Ingres as a dreamy Apollo in London-tailored clothes, his golden curls were the admiration of all romantic women in the romantic Paris of 1830, while his demoniacal hands were the dread and envy of his pianistic rivals. At seventy, robed in priestly black, the white curls that framed his warty, wrinkled face were still coveted by doting femininity, his fingers still conjured up enchantment from out a case of wire strings: his spirit had not aged. His personality and manners, not less than his art and wit, made him beloved by all. No man of his time was more truly the *grand seigneur* of music, or the fairy-godfather of struggling talent. In the Parisian salons of the July monarchy he was a peer of Chopin, Victor Hugo, George Sand and

Heine. Between rapid-fire runs and octave trills he could shrewdly discuss Saint-Simon's *nouveau christianisme* or political and social problems. He was at ease strolling with Napoleon III on the terrace of the Tuileries, or with Pius IX in the gardens of the Vatican. Whether living with the astonishing Countess d'Agoult on the shores of Lake Geneva, or at Weimar's "Altenburg" with the solicitous Princess Sayn-Wittgenstein in attendance; whether in the blaze of a crowded concert hall or in cloistral retirement at Santa Francesca Romana, with the ruins of the Forum at his door, the various scenes in this unparalleled career were always of a sort to keep the tongues of Europe wagging, to satisfy the public's craving for picturesque effects and sentimental complications.

While he furnished his publishers with numberless transcriptions of all the tunes in vogue, formed the most notable group of pianists any master ever reared, fought the battles of Wagner and a score of lesser

Zukunftsmusiker, attended to a stupendous correspondence and other literary work, he still found time to write those compositions which reveal him the exalted soul and daring pioneer he was.

Born at Raiding, near Oedenburg in Hungary, on October 22nd, 1811, Franz Liszt was fortunate in having a musical father who gave the boy his first piano lessons and left nothing undone to develop the exceptional abilities of his son. Aged nine, Franz played before an audience of Hungarian nobles, who were so impressed that they contributed to a fund which permitted the father to give up his position as farm superintendent of Count Esterhazy, and take his little prodigy to Czerny in Vienna. In 1823 Beethoven heard him play, and embraced him—the latter is authenticated, the former at least doubtful, considering the great man's tragic deafness. At the age of twelve Liszt was taken to Paris, where he created a *furore*. Cherubini would not

accept him at the Conservatoire, under the pretext that he was a foreigner. Reicha became his teacher in composition; on the piano there was little left for him to learn. Switzerland and London were next to hear him. For the long journeys in his travelling coach, he carried with him a little silent clavier to train his technique in daily exercises. After his father died, in 1827, Liszt taught and concertized in order to support his mother. He soon amassed a fortune. In the winter of 1833–34 he met Countess d'Agoult. Liszt vainly tried to escape the charms of this politico-poetic Circe. Their attachment created a scandal. It proved anew that our moral code was drawn up without consulting genius. One of their three children, Cosima, was married to Hans von Bülow, and later to Richard Wagner. Four years they lived within the tolerant confines of the Helvetian republic, or travelling in Italy. Then Liszt resumed his concertizing. With a large gift of money

from the proceeds of his recitals, he made possible the completion of the Beethoven monument at Bonn. In 1844 growing misunderstandings led to the final separation from the Countess. His wanderings lasted till 1847, carrying him through Germany, Russia, Sweden and Spain, fêted wherever he went. The university of Königsberg, where Kant had lectured, gave him a doctor's degree. Kings and Emperors had to be content to offer him orders, jewels and other costly trifles. Having entered into very cordial relations with the reigning house of Saxe-Weimar, he accepted the Grand-duke's offer in 1848, to become director of the court opera and concerts. From 1848 to 1861 he resided more or less permanently in the "city of the Muses," forever distinguished by Goethe and Schiller; but even in later years he liked to return to this charming quiet spot among the wooded mountains of Thuringia. During this period he wrote his most important orchestral works.

In his symphonic poems he followed the example of Berlioz, but with a greater felicity in the choice of his subjects, with a broader command of sensuous melody, and with a richer palette of instrumental colors. "Dante," "Tasso" and the "Faust Symphony" contain remarkable inventions in tonal beauty. By applying his methods of orchestration to the piano, he augmented its range and endowed it with a new wealth of dynamic shadings and contrasting sonorities.

During this first Weimar period he became the champion of Wagner. Memorable letters were exchanged between Liszt and Wagner, who, as a political exile from Germany, was not able to hear the first performance of his "Lohengrin" on August 28, 1850. Liszt's influence quickened the advance of music incalculably. Berlioz found in him an enthusiastic interpreter. These progressive tendencies met, as usual, with attacks from the reactionary element.

and, tired of petty cabals, Liszt left Weimar in 1861 and went to Rome, where he resided until 1870. His religious contemplations led him to study the old liturgical chants and sacred music; he was prompted now himself to write for the church. As his pupils and admirers had followed him wherever he went, so did they soon gather around him in the Eternal City, and he again held his court. He taught, composed, encouraged —always kind and hospitable—enjoying a glass of cognac and a rubber of whist, notwithstanding his clerical aspirations. He took the lower orders in 1865, and thereafter Abbé Liszt wore the Roman frock.

In 1875 he was made director of the musical Academy in Budapest, dividing his time between the Hungarian capital, Rome, and Weimar, to which old associations drew him ever again. His declining years were dimmed by the rising star of his son-in-law, Richard Wagner, who helped himself to much of what Liszt had created. Carrying

his train of disciples the length and breadth of Europe, spending royally of his wisdom and encouragement, his earthly travels came to an end at Bayreuth, on July 31, 1886, during a visit to the Wagnerian Mecca. Thus died he who was counted on as an added attraction to the "shrine"—lonely and inconsiderately—in the midst of the festivities presided over by his calculating daughter, Cosima.

The number of Liszt's compositions is very large. Not all of them withstand the wear of time. They can be classed roughly as, first, his piano music; second, his orchestral tone-poems; and third, his religious music. Each of these classes may be subdivided into the many *pièces d'occasion*, compositions written, as it were, to order, and those which are the spontaneous work of his own choosing and devising. His songs, while they are interesting and often beautiful, are rather "contrived" than inspired. It was only natural that the virtuoso should

write to dazzle the public. He did it with his "Hungarian Rhapsodies," his Études and Concertos. He could also be simple, and wove intimate confessions into the shorter sketches that illustrate, autobiographically, some memorable hours in his journeys and emotional life. His church music is not that of an ingenuous mind, after all, but betrays a sort of dilettante asceticism. He emphasized the obvious effects of the most effective ritual in Christendom. When he played some of his church music for Wagner, at Venice, in 1883, the latter remarked: "Your God makes a lot of noise." In a work like his "Legend of St. Elisabeth" the composer's dramatic and religious instincts mingle in more fruitful union. His "program symphony" was the model for a long line of successors, who must trace to him what they learned about the art of evoking mental conceptions and distinctive moods through aural sensations. "Till Eulenspiegel" of Richard Strauss, Rachmaninoff's

"Island of the Dead," and Debussy's "La Mer," are descendants of Liszt's "Mazeppa," "Battle of the Huns," "Les Préludes," and all his other orchestral pieces broidered upon the woof of some poetic or pictorial subject. But his contribution to music, as such and apart from programmatic associations, is the really vital service he rendered his art. Gifted with an ear that caught some of the unheard harmonies still stored beyond the threshold of consciousness, and opening the door for an instant, he let a fresh gust of sounding beauty into the world. He was the only composer of the nineteenth century who would have understood and liked the music of the early twentieth, because, among all the musicians of his time, he had the farthest vision and the least conceit.

XIV
WAGNER

Et tremblant et ravi, l'on sort de la vulgaire salle où le miracle de cette essentielle musique s'est accompli.

—*J.-K. Huysmans*

XIV

RICHARD WAGNER

Blazoned in blinding light—clear and sharp—stands the amazing Master of Bayreuth. He is the apotheosis of an era. Transfiguring the musical heritage of centuries, he is in himself a transfiguration. Rooted in the loam of tradition, his work branches into a gigantic tree, bearing fruit unlike any other; proudly lifting its topmost boughs into the heavens; clad in foliage that changed, through all the stages of life's ripening seasons, from the pale monochrome of Spring to the riotous splendor of the autumnal mountainside. If ever there was music that by sheer force and intensity "carried away" the hearer, it is Wagner's. Many have slandered and defiled it; more have waxed dithyrambic over it. Although the man and his work invite a careful application of critical probe and scalpel, one who

has throbbed under the spell of "Tristan's" magic can speak of that experience only in enviously wishing for the language of Francis Thompson's "Shelley."

Wagner was concentration and vigor personified. From both a physical and spiritual point of view, such achievements as his could have been accomplished only by a dynamic nature, loving controversy and undaunted by adversity. His ambitions were supported by absolute fatalism and boundless egoism. His mentality was complex; high ideals and lack of scruples did not prove incompatible with him. Wagner, for all his weakness, was a genius; he was an artist in spite of his theories. What the shell is to the egg, such are theories to a new germ in art. They are essential for a time. But the bird, when it is fully hatched, breaks the native prison and leaves it behind. Some artistic movements are not content to imitate the bird; they cling to their shell. The theories of Wagner—musical, philosophical,

sociological and political—did more to obstruct his success than to further it; they have caused among his followers more confusion than enlightenment. If his music conquered all obstacles that were placed in its way, if it is still the most radiant emanation of musical energy, it is because of its unprecedented gorgeousness and sensuous beauty. Also, because it was the work of a master craftsman, whose technique evolved with the higher reach of his aims.

It is idle to speculate whether the theatrical environments in which the boy grew up, and a fondness for the stage inherited from his father, helped Wagner or not. He wrote hardly any music that was not conceived as part of, or influenced by, a dramatic action. What few purely instrumental compositions he left, not originally intended for the theatre, are not among his best. He was dependent upon a "story" and a "scene" for inspiration. And thus a tin swan, cardboard dragon

and stuffed dove became living symbols to him; hissing steam pipes, gauze veils and burning pitch he saw as mighty elements. They were responsible for some of his most kindling and imposing music. In childhood he became saturated with the atmosphere peculiar to the stage. He had literary propensities; while in school, he wrote poetry. Wagner was a true poet only in the sense that he contrived for his operas situations which gave him opportunities to write poetic music. His verses, even as opera verses go, are not always felicitous and need the palliative song. Although possessed of a strong Saxon dialect, he delighted in reading the poems of his operas to his admirers. In his very extensive prose writings, the style often falls below the lofty idea he wishes to express. Prompted by his dislike for the Semitic race, he prophesied, in 1852, that the time was approaching when, intellectually, Germans "should be such paupers that the appearance of a new book from the

pen of Heinrich Heine would create quite a sensation." He little realized that this Jew from Düsseldorf, exiled in Paris, was one of the last great masters of the German tongue.

Wagner, the poet and essayist, cannot compare with the musician, nor was the latter primarily an opera composer, contrary to his own estimate. Much of Wagner's music is as thrilling in the concert room as it is in the theatre; the voice, particularly that belonging to the typically Wagnerian *Held* or "dramatic singer," is not always missed. And yet, who would do without that dark and empty street of Nuremberg, at the end of the second act of "Die Meistersinger," during the eighteen most ravishing measures in that ravishing score? Could we forgo the delicious liquidness of the three women's voices, with their inevitable "untemperedness," in the trio of the *Götterdämmerung* Rheinmaidens?

Crowded with portentous happenings, intricately connected with many currents of his time, the life of Richard Wagner is not adequately treated in a few pages. What the world of art, science and politics comprised of distinguished men and women, in his day, knew him as friend or enemy. His friends, whether in humble walks or seated upon thrones, were to him always welcome tools for obtaining small comforts or great advantages. Nor did he hesitate to hurt them to the quick, if his interest or whim seemed to demand it. His indebtedness to Liszt, only two years his senior, in matters of musical criticism and prompting, will never be known to a fraction. Had it not been for this magnanimous and intrepid champion, Wagner's star would have risen much later, events might have shaped themselves differently.

(Wilhelm) Richard Wagner, the youngest of seven children, was born May 22, 1813, at Leipzig, one day after Napoleon's victory

at Bautzen. Five months later, Napoleon was decisively beaten at Leipzig, and in the wake of the terrible carnage came sickness. Wagner's father, a police official, was among those who succumbed to the epidemic. Two years after his death, the widow married an actor, Ludwig Geyer, with whom the family moved to Dresden. Geyer died in 1821. From 1822 to 1827 Richard Geyer, as he was then known, went to school in Dresden. Upon the return of the family to Leipzig, in 1828, he continued his studies, and in February, 1831, entered the University.

His music lessons, so far, had not been systematic. He had tried his hand at the composition of overtures, and liked to "bluster about politics with young literati"; but not until Theodor Weinlig, Cantor of the Thomas School, had directed him to the right road, did his musical education make much headway. He began to devour Beethoven, he enthused over Weber's "Freischütz." His first large work was a sym-

phony, wholly imitative of Mozart and Beethoven, which was successfully given at the Leipzig Gewandhaus on January 10, 1833. It did in no wise show great talent, and much less originality. Four weeks earlier, in December 1832, at Paris, Berlioz's "Fantastic Symphony" had received a memorable performance. Thus approached, the two dates become indicative.

From February 1833 to January 1834 Wagner filled the position of chorusmaster at the little opera house in Würzburg, where his brother Albert was engaged as a singer. In the Autumn of 1834 he became conductor at the theatre in Magdeburg. This stage was the first to present an opera by Wagner; it was "Das Liebesverbot," poorly played and coolly received on March 29, 1836. At Magdeburg Wagner fell in love with the actress Minna Planer, whom he married on November 24, 1836, at Königsberg, where both had found engagements. When the manager failed, the Wagners were fortunate

in being asked to join the troupe of the newly organized theatre at Riga, where they remained until July, 1839. They were not well suited to each other; yet Minna, incapable of comprehending her husband, stood faithfully by him through the period of his greatest want. When twenty years later she had cause to be jealous, and showed her feelings too violently, it came to a separation. Wagner wrote of that parting, 1858, —made final in 1861—in his Reminiscences: "It was the most brilliant summer day with a bright, cloudless sky; I remember that I never once looked back, or shed a tear on taking leave of her, and this almost terrified me."

The time of their hardest trials awaited Wagner and his wife at Paris, where they arrived in the Autumn of 1839, having journeyed by boat from Pillau to London, remaining there a week, thence going to Boulogne. Here Wagner met Meyerbeer, who received him cordially and gave him

letters of introduction to influential people in Paris. But the sojourn in Paris from September 1839 to April 1842 was a long succession of hardships and disappointments. Wagner had to do hack work and arrangements in order to make a living. The only composition of his performed in Paris during that time (Feb. 1841) was an overture to a play, "Columbus," written in Magdeburg. He tried in vain to interest the director of the Paris Opera in his "Rienzi," which he had begun at Riga. Several opera projects had occupied him, but this one, carried out according to the Meyerbeerian formula, was the first work which established Wagner's reputation when it was finally brought out at Dresden, October 20, 1842. In Paris Wagner had written an orchestral work, "Eine Faust-ouvertüre," and completed his opera "Der fliegende Holländer" during the summer of 1841. "Under the stress of the most terrible privations" he orchestrated the opera. All efforts to have it accepted failed. He sold

the French rights to the plot, and with the proceeds returned to Germany.

The performance of "Rienzi" at Dresden had as a consequence Wagner's engagement at the Royal Opera House. It was there that "Der fliegende Holländer" was first given, in 1843, and "Tannhäuser" in 1845. As early as 1848 he began to sketch a libretto founded on the Nibelungen saga. He was compromised in the revolutionary May riots of 1849 and had to flee from Dresden. He turned to Liszt at Weimar, who was then preparing a performance of "Tannhäuser"; but on learning that a warrant had been issued for his capture, he hurried to Paris, and from there went to Zürich, where he arrived in June. The warrant, in giving his *signalement*, said of the fugitive that "in moving and speaking, he is hasty."

During his stay in Switzerland his pen was busier with literary essays than with musical compositions. In 1852 he made the acquaintance of Otto Wesendonck, a

rich merchant whose wife, Mathilde, was as much attracted by Wagner as she attracted him; their friendship proved a great inspiration to the musician. The beginnings of "Tristan und Isolde" date from that period. Although, after six years, misunderstandings led to a break, their correspondence continued. In 1853 the poem of the Nibelungen tetralogy was privately printed. Wagner finished the composition of "Das Rheingold" in 1854. In the following year he conducted a series of orchestra concerts at London. "Die Walküre" was completed in 1856; "Siegfried" was begun; but Wagner laid aside the "Ring" for "Tristan."

He went to Venice, late in August, 1858, and found quarters in one of the ancient *palazzi*, writing in his Reminiscences: "I gazed down from my balcony with growing satisfaction on the wonderful canal, and said to myself that here I would complete 'Tristan'." He completed only the second

act in Venice; the third was finished at Lucerne, in August, 1859.

He tried his luck once more in Paris, in the early part of 1860, with three concerts which created hot discussion. They were the signal for animated attack and defence; they incited Beaudelaire, the poet, nobly and intelligently to expound the merits of a music that musicians scorned. Though these concerts proved a financial failure, they led to the notorious performance of "Tannhäuser" in Paris on March 13, 1861.

A political amnesty made it possible for Wagner to return to Germany. "Tristan" was accepted at Vienna, but after 57 rehearsals it had to be abandoned as "impossible." During the following winter, Wagner wrote the book of "Die Meistersinger," the first sketches of which date back to 1845; he began to compose the music at Bieberich, on the Rhein, in 1862. The score was finished five years later.

A concert tour took him to Leipzig, St. Petersburg, Moscow, Pest, Breslau, and finally back to Vienna. Money matters grew constantly worse; he moved heaven and earth to straighten out his affairs. He left Vienna to seek refuge in Switzerland, and had reached Stuttgart, in the spring of 1864, when an emissary from King Ludwig II (who had just ascended the Bavarian throne) brought him a letter from the young monarch, inviting him to Munich, where ease and peace should be his. Providence had intervened at the most critical hour and in the most wonderful manner. Wagner ended his personal Reminiscences, which extend to this point with these words: "The dangerous road along which Fate beckoned me to such great ends, was not destined to be clear of troubles and anxieties of a kind unknown to me heretofore, but I was never again to feel the weight of the everyday hardships of existence under the protection of my exalted friend."

Attentions and honors were showered on Wagner by his royal benefactor. Ludwig, the dreamer and phantast, did all he could to make the phantastic musician's dream come true. Thus "Tristan und Isolde" was brought out at Munich in 1865, and three years later "Die Meistersinger" received a brilliant performance. But jealousies and cabals had made Wagner so unpopular in Munich, that he preferred to return to the country that had given him shelter before. He settled this time at Triebschen, near Lucerne, where he stayed most of the time from December, 1865, until he took up his abode at Bayreuth in 1872. He married Cosima von Bülow, a daughter of Liszt, in August, 1870. Writing, in June, to a friend about the impending ceremony, Wagner said of his wife: "She has defied all disapprobation and taken upon herself every condemnation. She has borne to me a wonderfully beautiful and vigorous boy, whom I could boldly call Siegfried."

And for a birthday present, on December 25 of the same year, Wagner presented Cosima with the wonderfully beautiful and tender "Siegfried Idyl."

In his quest for the idyllic home of his fulness and the site of his perfect stage, Wagner had chosen Bayreuth. A theatre was to be built especially for his Nibelungen tetralogy, which was nearing its completion. The cornerstone of the "Festspielhaus" was laid on Wagner's birthday, 1872, and the first performance of "The Ring of the Nibelung" was given there in its entirety in August, 1876. The large deficit was covered by the foundation of numerous Wagner Societies the world over, which collected funds by the performance of the master's works. "Parsifal," ruminated for a long time, was written during 1878 and 1879, the orchestration was finished in January, 1882, and this "Bühnenweihfestspiel" had its first public hearing at Bayreuth in the summer of the same year. It was the culmination of Wag-

ner's career. Seeking rest from his exertions of preparing the performance, and in order to improve his failing health, Wagner spent the winter at Venice. Here, at the palazzo Vendramin on the Grand Canal, he died on February 13, 1883. His body was buried in the grounds of his house "Wahnfried" at Bayreuth.

It matters little, to-day, what principles were involved in Wagner's reforms; they have conserved only historical interest. His "music of the future" belongs now to the past, no matter how long we shall continue to enjoy and need it. Wagner abolished in his operas the "aria" and all other musical "numbers" which were introduced for the music's sake alone. To him the dramatic continuity of the play was paramount, and in order to maintain it he invented what he called the "continuous melody." He was the first to label consistently, with pertinent musical motives (*Leitmotive*), certain characters or ideas as they entered and reappeared

in the course of the action. But it is safe to say that all these innovations would have counted for little, had not his dramas possessed such grandeur, his melodies such power, his motives such psychologic truth. He was accused, in his lifetime, of shunning "sweet concord" and revelling in noise and dissonance. Each advance in music has to be fought for against the natural prejudices of "retarded hearing." The lessons of yesterday should make us cautious in judging the harmonic adventures of to-morrow. There will always be a "music of the future," which some day will be old and cherished as a patrimonial treasure, provided it be so soundly and supremely "musical" as was the music of Richard Wagner.

XV
VERDI

Die Verächter italienischer Musik werden einst in der Hölle ihrer wohlverdienten Strafe nicht entgehen und sind vielleicht verdammt, die lange Ewigkeit hindurch nichts anderes zu hören als Fugen von Sebastian Bach.

—*Heinrich Heine*

XV

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Three centuries of Italian opera lie between the first real attempt at this form of musico-dramatic expression, the "Dafne" of Rinuccini, and "Falstaff," the octogenarian Verdi's last and finest work for the stage. Rinuccini's poem with the music by Peri and Corsi was performed privately in Corsi's house at Florence, some time after 1594 and before 1597. Between 1600 and 1800, the mythological subject of Daphne's change into a laurel tree, as related in Ovid's "Metamorphoses," had been used by no fewer than fifteen composers, including Handel. At about the same time that the circle of Florentine dilettanti was experimenting with "chanted plays," substituting the solo voice with instrumental accompaniment for the then prevailing type of choral part-writing (chiefly unaccompanied), Shakespeare was

immortalizing the character of Falstaff in his "Henry IV" and "The Merry Wives of Windsor." Falstaff had appeared in fourteen different operas before Arrigo Boito, poet and composer, wrote his libretto for Verdi, whose opera was first presented at La Scala in Milan, on February 9, 1893.

Not until 1637, at Venice, was the first opera house opened to the general public. These novel spectacles soon formed the chief attraction of the Carnival season, not only in the rich and pleasure-loving Venetian republic, but at all the courts of Italy, great or small. The rest of Europe quickly followed the Italian example. It became the ambition of most composers to write for the stage. Church music, which had attained such splendor in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, was neglected, and even religious compositions now seemed written for an altar that was lit, not by the mystic flickering of blessed candles, but by the brazen glare of footlights. A successful opera was

a lucrative thing, and theatrical managers everywhere commissioned prominent musicians to write new works for each succeeding season. The names of Draghi, Leo, Jommelli, Sarti, Sacchini, Paesiello, Piccinni, Cimarosa, to mention but a few, stand for so many battles hotly waged in the boxes, pit and galleries—battles for the public favor of a moment, fought with the weapons of intrigue, invective, tumultuous applause and merciless catcalls. It was the age that gave birth to that vainest, most petted and highest-paid artist, the opera singer. Over a dulcet *aria d'abilità*, an elaborate *roulade* or the quality of a trill the affairs of state and civilization were forgotten; or again politics seized upon the make-believe world of flitter and tinsel, and in the guise of the play and to the tune of stirring airs, national questions or aspirations became a public show, with an audience divided by party lines rather than difference of musical opinion.

The opera evolved, and with it progressed music; but as a social institution it has hardly changed since its inception. In the nineteenth century many names were added to the long roll of Italians who achieved fame as opera composers, great names like those of Donizetti, Bellini and Rossini—with that of Verdi to crown the list.

Giuseppe Verdi was born October 10, 1813, at Roncole, a village near the little town of Busseto, in the former grand-duchy of Parma. He was therefore only seven months younger than Richard Wagner. At the time of his birth, Italy formed part of the French empire, under Napoleon I. At Napoleon's abdication in 1814, the duchy of Parma was allotted to Marie Louise, Napoleon's dethroned wife and daughter of the Austrian emperor. The subsequent rule of persecution and oppression, however, was inspired by Vienna. Verdi's youth and musical development coincided with the

period of Italian struggle for emancipation from the Austrian yoke. His parents made a meagre living by keeping an inn and a small shop in Roncole. Although brought up in the humblest surroundings, it was fortunate that Giuseppe found incentive and understanding for his talents in a community which was intensely musical. The village organist gave him his first lessons; the father bought him a rickety little spinnet. In time he was sent to Busseto, three miles distant from Roncole, to get what rudimentary knowledge the school-teacher had to impart. While still a mere lad he was chosen to succeed the old organist at Roncole, who had died. Every Sunday and holiday saw him on the highroad, walking the three miles from Busseto to the little village church, where, to the great pride not only of his parents but of all the worshippers, "Giuseppino" fingered the clattering keys and occasionally stretched his little

foot for a deep pedal note that mightily reverberated from the vaulted roof.

Busseto enjoyed the distinction of possessing an orchestra formed by capable amateurs, under the direction of a musician named Provesi. One of the leading spirits in this little band was a distiller, Barezzi, a friend of old Verdi. When Giuseppe had finished his school education, he entered the employ of Barezzi, who housed and treated him like a son. Barezzi possessed a thing very rare for those days, a grand piano of Viennese make; he also possessed a pretty and musical daughter, Margherita. Young Verdi was much attracted by both the precious instrument and the charming girl. His studies in counterpoint and composition were now directed by Provesi. The town of Busseto granted him a stipend which enabled him to seek further and better instruction in Milan. But upon his asking for admission to the Milan conservatory of music, it was refused by the director on account of "lack

of technical equipment." Perhaps this is not so surprising as it may seem. The academic training essential in an institution of that kind, Verdi had not acquired. Had he been brought up in a manner conforming to these academic standards, his natural impulse might have been dwarfed or diverted. He might have become an obscure composer of creditable masses and motets. As it was, he had been permitted to "grow up musically" in an unsophisticated world where a "tune" counted for everything, where popular taste was all for *le belle romanze*. However, while the doors of the august conservatory remained closed to him, he found an excellent teacher in Vincenzo Lavigna, conductor of the orchestra at La Scala, the grand opera house of Milan. This association with theatrical circles had a directing influence upon Verdi's development. He began to compose more ambitious works, but none of them had significant merits. Upon the death of Provesi, in 1833, the boy of twenty was

invited to return to Busseto and become the successor of his old master as conductor of the little orchestra and organist at the cathedral. He did not obtain the latter position, because of strong objections from part of the town authorities to whom the young man's musical tendencies seemed altogether "too worldly." But Barezzi received his protégé with open arms, and two years later accorded him the hand of Margherita. The little town did not offer room enough for Verdi's ambition; therefore he went, with his wife and two little sons, to Milan in 1837, intending to enter the operatic field. He found a librettist in the nineteen-year-old poet Temistocle Solera, and in 1839 the first fruit of their collaboration, "Oberto, conte di San Bonifacio," was successfully produced at La Scala. All seemed to point to a splendid future for the youthful composer. He was commissioned to write a comic opera, and was in the midst of this work, when his wife and both his children died within the

space of two months. Under such mental stress it was impossible for him to give of his best. Although he completed the opera, it was a failure. Discouraged by so much misfortune, he retired to Busseto. But he found that only renewed activity could really bring the oblivion he sought, so he finally returned to Milan. The director of La Scala offered him a libretto that had been rejected by Otto Nicolai, the composer of "The Merry Wives of Windsor." The libretto was that of "Nabucco," a biblical story. Verdi felt attracted by the subject, and went to work. The success of the première on March 9, 1842, decided Verdi's future. The leading soprano in the cast of "Nabucco" was Giuseppina Strepponi, who later became Verdi's second wife.

From that point on, Verdi's career resembled that of all other Italian opera composers who had preceded him. Failures alternated with successes. A constant demand for new works left no time to ponder

over either. The old "opera d'obbligo" was still necessary to the Carnival season, and every year witnessed these rival productions in all the larger cities of Italy. On February 11, 1843, "I Lombardi," first given at La Scala, confirmed Verdi's operatic ascendancy. Rossini had given up writing operas; Donizetti had but five more years to live, with his mental powers beginning to give way; Bellini had died, thirty-three years old, in 1835. That Wagner's "The Flying Dutchman" was the contemporary of Verdi's "Nabucco" is of interest, considering that it was thirty years before the Italian's work became in the slightest degree influenced by the German's novel procedures. Eleven operas had followed "I Lombardi" (with only "Ernani," first performed March 9, 1844, as a striking success) before "Rigoletto," on March 11, 1851, set Venice literally wild with enthusiasm. The text, fashioned upon Victor Hugo's "Le roi s'amuse," had to be subjected to various revisions before the

Austrian censor would pass it. Verdi was known for his patriotic sentiments. Northern Italy was infested with spies, paid by the Viennese police. Any allusion, however veiled, to governmental abuses or longings for independence, was ruthlessly prosecuted. "Rigoletto" was followed in quick succession by "Il Trovatore" and "La Traviata." When "Il Trovatore" was sung for the first time, in Rome on January 19, 1853, the Tiber had overflowed the streets of the city. Yet, ankle-deep in water, people stood at the gates from nine o'clock in the morning, on the day of the first performance, in order to gain admission. "La Traviata" seemed doomed to failure, owing to the poor interpreters at the première. Verdi remained silent for four years. In 1855 followed "The Sicilian Vespers," written for the Opéra in Paris. "Un Ballo in Maschera" again attracted the censor's attention in 1858, and the murdered King Gustavus III of Sweden had to be turned into a "Governor of Bos-

ton," the opera coming too soon after the attempted assassination of Napoleon III by the Italian Orsini. But Napoleon, stirred to action at last, espoused the cause of Italy against Austria, and after the battles of Magenta and Solferino, in June, 1859, the dream of a United Kingdom of Italy was nearing its realization. The name of VERDI, standing for Vittore Emanuele Re d'Italia, became the battle-cry of the patriots.

The last in this almost uninterrupted chain of operas was also the revelation of a new and greater Verdi. It was "Aida," written upon command of the Viceroy of Egypt, finished in 1869, and performed at Cairo in 1871. The composer could not be persuaded to cross the Mediterranean. When the opera was given in Europe, Verdi had the satisfaction of winning serious and enthusiastic consideration from even the sternest music critics, who had up to that time spoken lightly of his "melodic facility and harmonic

shallowness." But what seemed to these critics the composer's splendid swan-song, was in reality only the first of three works which ultimately showed Verdi's genius at its full stature. After another pause of eighteen years he gave the world his magnificent "Otello." In his eightieth year, 1893—as though at last in the happy calm of old age he had rediscovered the humorous vein that fifty-three years ago the annihilation of his young family had cut—he wrote that masterful "Falstaff," perhaps the finest of all Italian comedy-operas, sparkling with youthfulness and subtle musical wit, the ultimate proof of Verdi's consummate artistry.

No sum of honors or distinctions could induce Verdi to abandon the quietude of his country estate Sant' Agata near his native Busseto, where he died on Jan. 27, 1901. As a landed gentleman he preferred to live the summers amid surroundings beloved since

childhood; his winters were passed mostly at Genoa.

Much of Verdi's inspiration responded to a purely popular note. No composer's melodies have been sung and whistled by a greater number of people than were his. A Requiem Mass, composed in 1874 in memory of the poet Manzoni, is more theatrical than churchly, and it can hardly be counted a departure from Verdi's style. The public of Italy that attended the first opera performance at Venice in 1637 had grown into the public of the world. And that public looked to Verdi for its greatest joys, with almost fanatic devotion. His last two operas, revealing all his ripened mastery, are those least performed. It is still the wealth of sensuous melody contained in "Rigoletto," "Il Trovatore" and "Aida" that sends thrills through the crowded opera houses of both hemispheres and perpetuates the glory of Italian opera in the work of Italy's greatest *maestro*.

XVI
FRANCK

Tout n'est pas lumière dans cette âme; la lumière n'en est que plus émouvante parce qu'elle brille au loin.

—*Romain Rolland*

XVI

CÉSAR FRANCK

César (-Auguste) Franck was born in the Belgian town of Liége, December 10, 1822. His father, a stern and self-willed man, took it into his head to make musicians of his two sons, Joseph, the older by two years, and César. It so happened for once that this paternal dictation was not followed by disaster, but helped to develop at least one of the children into a musical genius of the first order. When César was eleven years old, he played the piano well enough to undertake a concert tour through Belgium, always accompanied by his eager and watchful sire. In 1835 the boys had apparently learned all that local masters could teach them, and their father decided to take them to Paris. César's first teacher there was Anton Reicha, the friend of Beethoven, who had just succeeded to Boieldieu's chair in the French

Academy, an honor he was not to enjoy very long, for he died in the following year. In 1837 César became a pupil in the *Conservatoire*, which he reëntered thirty-five years later as professor. His talents received due acknowledgment from the faculty, bringing him even an "extraordinary" prize when, at an examination in sight-reading in 1838, he transposed the test piece a minor third lower, playing it thus without the shadow of hesitancy. But even so, he was only one of the countless host of young and confident musicians who, armed with medals and diplomas, go every year into the cruel fight for existence, out of which the majority comes disappointed, with nothing saved but medals and diplomas. As far as arduous toil and lack of wordly rewards were concerned, the life of César Franck differed but little from the run of academic prize-winners, who find it so hard afterwards to win their pittance of daily bread.

Having taken organ lessons from Benoist since 1841, and having made such progress in composition under Leborne's tuition that he was ready to compete for the prize of all prizes, the one that led to Rome, his father suddenly decreed that, for financial reasons, César should take up the career of a virtuoso. Therefore, instead of going to the Villa Medicis, young Franck had to traverse the provinces, playing show pieces of his own and others' making, to thrill rural audiences at the thought of hearing a *médailliste*.

In 1844, the family settled permanently in Paris. From that time on until his death —a little less than half a century—César Franck taught music. We must discount, against the dozen men of genuine gifts who in the course of time came under his influence and valued his advice, the more than hundred dozen lessons that this gentle, conscientious man wasted on mediocrity.

Franck's first work of importance was the oratorio "Ruth," performed in 1846. Liszt was impressed by it, as we may see from a letter of his, written in 1854: "Many years ago I conceived a very favorable opinion of the talent of M. César Franck as a composer at a performance of his Trios (very remarkable, in my opinion, and far superior to other works of the same type published these last few years). His oratorio 'Ruth' also contains some very beautiful things and bears the stamp of an elevated and well sustained style."

On February 22, 1848, in the midst of the revolution, Franck married a young actress; fortunately for him, she was made of different stuff from Berlioz's Irish "Ophelia." The ceremony took place at Notre-Dame de Lorette, where Franck had been appointed organist, and to reach it the bridal pair and guests had to climb over barricades erected by insurgents. Shortly, the couple left the parental home and

founded a hearth of their own. In 1858 Franck became choirmaster at Sainte-Clotilde, and a little later was made organist at the same church. In the unrelieved shadow of this organ-loft Franck spent the better part of his life. From the many-voiced instrument, whispering softly above the murmured prayers of the worshippers or shouting triumphantly its Hosannas, he often lit the spark of composition by his superb improvisation. Franck wrote during these years much sacred music, but aside from the larger oratorios, like "The Beatitudes," on which he worked from 1869 to 1879, and "Redemption" (1873), most of his masses and motets are, in spite of his sincere religious fervor, routine music fitted to churchly routine. The note of sublime contriteness and faith, of inexplicable and unshakable belief, sounds deepest in the instrumental works belonging to the last period of his life, and on which his glory rests.

Franck became the successor of his teacher Benoist at the *Conservatoire*, on the latter's retirement in 1872. And as a simple professor he remained at that institution until his death. He did not have the aggressiveness that captures worldly honors. Comparatively few were the occasions on which he was permitted the joy of hearing his own music played. Outside of a small circle of disciples, his worth was hardly recognized. Several symphonic poems, influenced by Liszt, whom he greatly revered, had brought his name before the larger public, but none of these works had made a decided impression. His pupils and friends collected funds for a Franck Festival, which took place in January, 1887, but the ill-prepared performance was far from satisfactory. When his Symphony in D minor, dedicated to his pupil Henri Duparc, was first performed, most of the critics did not know what to make of it. But Franck was satisfied, and, on returning home, he an-

swered his family's impatient queries about the reception of the work with a simple: "Oh, it sounded well; just as I thought it would!" In April, 1890, the composer had the satisfaction of his first real success, when the remarkable string quartet was played by Eugène Ysaye and his associates at a concert of the Société Nationale, of which Franck was a founder and of which he had been elected president.

In May of the same year, on his way to one of his pupils, he was run into by an omnibus and severely injured. He rallied slowly, but in the Autumn he had an attack of pleurisy to which he succumbed on November 8, 1890. His funeral was simple; the mourners included but few representatives of musical Paris. France was not aware then that a very great master had passed away.

The ripest works that Franck has left us had their origin after 1872. They include the symphony, the string quartet, the piano

quintet, the sonata for violin and piano, the two triptychs for piano alone—namely, the "Prelude, Choral and Fugue" (1884) and the "Prelude, Aria and Finale" (1887)—and his last work, the three monumental chorales for organ. These show Franck's final manner and full mastery. He possessed to an uncommon degree what one might call the instinct of counterpoint. He delighted in the artful interweaving of themes, in which the independence of the organ manuals and pedals had liberally trained him. With a polyphonic dexterity equalled only by Bach, he combined a love for sensuous suavity and brilliant emphasis peculiar to Liszt. Wholly of his own devising are the extraordinary mobility and felicitousness of his modulations. The inflections of his short but pregnant melodic phrases are as unmistakably "Franckian" as certain shifting progressions of his harmony. His "generating motive," the kernel of endless permutations in the progress of a work, enhanced

at each reappearance with new color and added import, has marked a whole epoch in musical composition; the "cyclic" form, so much favored by him, threatened for a time to exercise an undue tyranny over the methods of his followers. His leaning toward rhythmic squareness is not always helpful to the general effect. His music was slow in gaining universal esteem; but as so often with the work of a neglected genius, posterity, once it had awakened to the beauty of that music, proceeded to bestow on it the doubtful favor of making it a household necessity and a program certainty.

Franck's nature was humble, pious and kind. Apparently unwearied by his constant drudgery, he seized what spare moments he found to let the source of his imaginings yield him the ecstatic mood in which his masterworks were born. Sometimes we hear an outcry in this music, a rattling at the prison gates of earthly confining, and we begin to wonder if the devout mind of this Catholic

was never subjected to doubt or to the experiences of Saint Anthony. The loveliness of some ingratiating melody, the red-blooded sensuousness of some bold harmonic progression, followed by awesome pages of hopeless gloom, hint at the complicated mentality which belonged to this outwardly amiable and simple man. He reminds one of the painter-monks in the Middle Ages, who blended in the traits of smiling Madonnas their sacred hopes and secular regrets. The mysticism of that little music teacher with the gray side-whiskers, who gave piano lessons at three francs an hour to anæmic daughters of "our better people," is the longing for a Paradise in which the saints of heaven betray their Olympian ancestry. In spite of forty years, cloistered in a dim organ-loft where the stale odor of yesterday's incense lingered always, his nostrils seem to have caught—as if remembering a foregone incarnation—the rich and pungent smell of the salt sea and mountain laurel that sultry

winds are blowing around the rocks of Naxos, lost in the blue Ægean and dreaming of Ariadne. That is the wonder of Franck's finest music, this pagan passion, illuminated with the patient and multi-colored artistry of medieval missals.

XVII
BRAHMS

Besides temporary or accidental biases, there seem to be sects and parties in taste and criticism (with a set of appropriate watch words) coeval with the arts and composition, and that will last as long as the difference with which men's minds are originally constituted.

—*William Hazlitt*

XVII

JOHANNES BRAHMS

Nothing in the comparatively quiet life of Brahms was so resounding as his entrance into the musical arena. Heralded by Schumann in the famous article of the *Neue Zeitschrift für Musik* (October 23, 1853) as sprung "like Minerva fully armed from the head of Jove," welcomed as "a young blood by whose cradle graces and heroes kept watch," the twenty-year-old composer had gained a reputation overnight. But it was a reputation that he had to fight for and live up to, nevertheless, amid the strife of opposing "tendencies." The romanticist Schumann claimed discovery of "the elect" who would lead music along "new paths," letting it be understood that they were a prolongation of the road which Schumann himself had taken. The followers of Liszt, on the other hand—always eager to enroll

"young blood" under the banner of Wagner's "young Germany"—were ready to count this startling newcomer among their number. Brahms disappointed both, romanticists as well as progressives. He was, and remained, a modern classicist and, as such, a thing apart in music.

In thanking Schumann, the bewildered recipient of so high an honor wrote: "The public praise you have bestowed on me will have fastened general expectation so exceptionally upon my performances that I do not know how I shall be able to do any justice to it." Natural as such doubt may seem, it does not appear to have bothered Brahms very much. While not insensible to homage paid by the public, and valuing particularly the appreciation of kindred spirits, he went his own way stolidly so far as concerned the quarrels of "Philistines" and "Reformers."

Brahms and Wagner, though contemporaries, were contrary poles. Simultaneous

but opposite currents are not uncommon in art. The relation between Wagner and Brahms, twenty years younger, is approximately the same as that between Leonardo da Vinci and Albrecht Dürer, the younger by nineteen years. Wagner and Leonardo are the painters and psychologists, Dürer and Brahms the anatomists and draftsmen. Dürer visited Venice, but his contact with the colored opulence of the Italians did not alter his manner. Brahms passed the better part of his life during the turbulent ascendancy of "representative music" as Liszt and Wagner understood it: and yet he kept faith with the traditions of "absolute music." He shunned Bayreuth. In 1882, when "Parsifal" was to be given its first performance, he wrote to Hans von Bülow, who pressed for his acceptance of an invitation: "The fact that I cannot come to a decision about Bayreuth probably means that I am unable to produce that 'Yes'. I need hardly say that I go in dread of the Wagnerians, who

would spoil my pleasure in the best of Wagners." He never took the risk.

In more ways than one, Brahms suggests the bearded, curly-haired master of Nuremberg, the artisan, man of the people, humble and indefatigable worker, patient elaborator of detail, whose burin delighted in formal arrangement, fanciful ornament, variation of pattern, boldness of outline, and knew how to light the depths of darkness by rays of a mysterious glitter. The processes of different arts should never be confounded. And yet, by borrowing the terminology of one, the intent of another is often explained. If chamber-music is the etching of tonal art, then Brahms may be justly called the Dürer among musicians.

Johannes Brahms came of peasant stock. His ancestors had lived in the marshy lowlands of Holstein, in the heath country of Lüneburg. He was born May 7, 1833, at Hamburg. His father played the double-bass in a theatre orchestra. His principal

teacher of piano and theory was Eduard Marxsen, to whom Brahms later dedicated his second piano concerto. In 1847, Johannes played for the first time in public. Other appearances, with increasing success, followed in 1848. Years of struggle marked that period of Brahms's youth, like the beginnings of so many great musicians. He played for dances, arranged music, and earned a few *Groschen* wherever he could. He began to work on his first compositions of importance, among which two piano sonatas bear the opus-numbers 1 and 2.

When the Hungarian violinist Reményi visited Hamburg, in 1852, Brahms joined him as accompanist. It was through Reményi that he first learned to know and love Hungarian dance-music, and was introduced to Reményi's countryman, the young violin virtuoso Joseph Joachim. The friendship of Brahms and Joachim was lifelong. Joachim was instrumental in sending Brahms to Liszt at Weimar, where the shy and

nervous Johannes made no impression. Joachim urged Brahms to seek Schumann, at Düsseldorf, and in the course of a journey along the Rhein, in the autumn of 1853, the notable meeting took place. From that date Brahms came forward as an acknowledged composer of highest ideals. In steady growth his talents ripened and broadened along lines that were rather a continuation of classic forms than the branching out in new directions.

There are not many events to record which mark a change in his activities. From 1854–58 he was director of music at the court of Lippe-Detmold, a sleepy little duchy. His occupation left him much leisure to compose. But he longed for livelier surroundings. In 1860 he spent some time at Winterthur, in Switzerland, to be with the musician Theodor Kirchner. Bülow wrote in 1853: "Winterthur is several decades more advanced than Munich." Brahms appeared occasionally in public;

playing mostly his own compositions, but he abhorred concert tours.

A turning-point in the life of Brahms was his visit to Vienna, in 1862, and his subsequent choice of the Austrian capital as his permanent abode. He felt attracted by the light-hearted characteristics of the Viennese and their proverbial love for music. From 1863–64 he conducted the Vienna *Singakademie*, and from 1871–74 the concerts of the "Society of the Friends of Music." These were the only "official" positions he held in Vienna. They may have contributed an incentive to the writing of Brahms' two greatest choral works, the "German Requiem" (1867) and the "Song of Fate" (1871). The first is a Christian, the second a pagan interpretation of mortal woes and heavenly blessings, of life and death and immortality. Eduard Hanslick, the Viennese critic and perfervid apostle of Brahms, wrote: "Since Bach's B minor Mass and Beethoven's *Missa solemnis*, noth-

ing had been written, in kind, to compare with the 'German Requiem'."

His systematic and assiduous labors were interrupted only by travels and vacations, every year, in some summer resort or other. He was a child of nature and never happier than when he could escape the turmoil of city life, to find peace and inspiration in absolute abandonment to wood or mountain, lake or sea. He seldom made plans: "My movements depend on my whim, the weather and various attractions that may offer." When the time came to leave his plain but comfortable bachelor quarters in Vienna, he would seek congenial companions and set out to explore the natural beauties or artistic wealth of foreign places. One of his friends gives this description of him on such an excursion: "He was most at his ease in a striped flannel shirt, without either tie or stiff collar: even his soft felt hat was more often carried in his hand than on his head. In bad weather a brownish-

gray shawl, thrown around the shoulders and fastened on the breast with a huge pin, completed the curious unfashionable attire at which people gazed in astonishment." Brahms greatly cared for Italy. When he visited Sicily with his friend Billroth, the famous surgeon wrote from Taormina to Hanslick: "Five hundred feet above the murmuring waves! Full moon! Intoxicating scent of orange blossoms, red cactus blooming as richly on the huge, picturesque rocks as moss does with us! Forests of palms and lemons, Moorish castles, well-preserved Greek theatre! The broad line of snow-clad Etna, the pillar of flame! Add to this a wine called Monte Venere! Above all, *Johannes in ecstasy!*"

The correspondence of Brahms affords helpful glimpses into the workings of his mind, especially with regard to the history of some of his compositions. But he was not a brilliant letter-writer, nor did he have illusions on that point, as may be seen from

what he wrote, in 1883, to George Henschel, then in Boston: "I beg you once for all to remember that with me the moment is still to come when I shall write the first letter with pleasure!" His aversion to public appearances prompted him to write, at another time: "I hardly think I shall allow myself to be persuaded to give concerts; but to listen, to enjoy, and afterwards to drink with you—all that I do to perfection." He was a connoisseur in matters of his two most delectable brews, coffee and beer. Though he always liked solitude when engaged in work, he found social intercourse and frank gaiety no less necessary. An early riser, temperate of habits, he led a calm and happy existence to which the ordinary griefs of life and the extraordinary joys of great artistic achievements brought their contrasting emotions. He died at Vienna, April 3, 1897.

The music of Brahms derives much of its peculiar charm from two widely differing elements. The composer's fondness for the

lyrical expressions of the common people is not only evidenced by his many and exquisite arrangements of folk-songs; it leads him often to imitate this artlessness in the melodic contours of his own invention. Joined to this homely tenderness or vigor is the delight—and sometimes the absorption—in a learned and cunning manipulation of his material, producing the very opposite of simplicity. Even Hanslick had to admit this "noble but dangerous inclination to conceal his ideas under a web of polyphony." Modern in the sense that he sounded a personal note in his music, he nevertheless was a classicist by his adherence to standard forms, albeit his freedom in the employment of these forms gives them the appearance of ample and harmonious raiment rather than of confining bounds. The compositions in which the art of Brahms unfolds itself most fully are his chamber music, many of his songs, and several of his pieces for the piano. His four symphonies

contain lofty ideas and passages of exalted loveliness, as well as stretches that drag laboriously and drearily along. The many-voiced orchestra did not always yield him the richness of sonority that he could draw from a trio or quartet of instruments, united in the noblest type of "absolute" music. His Horn-trio (Op. 40), the Piano-quintet (Op. 34), the Piano-trios (Op. 8 and 101), together with the Clarinet-quintet (Op. 115), are as plates imprinted with the mark of genius, in which the etcher conjures up vaulted domes, glittering façades, or the transcendent landscapes of the soul.

XVIII
TSCHAIKOWSKY

We have an instinctive sense of the fugitive and perishing nature of all sweet things,—of beauty, of youth, of life; of all those fair shows of the world, of which music seems to be the voice, and of whose transitory nature it reminds us most when it is most beautiful, because it is then that we most regret our mortality.

—*Leigh Hunt*

XVIII

PETER ILJITCH TSCHAIKOWSKY

The musician Tschaikowsky, although at times as Russian as any of his musical compatriots and contemporaries, was not so strongly "of the soil," not so much reared on Slavic folk-tunes or nurtured by Asiatic influences, as were, for instance, Balakiref, Moussorgsky or Rimsky-Korsakof. Nor was he fond of the parochial pose. What he coined had not merely national currency; his music bore on its face the stamp of genius and on the reverse showed the mark of universal circulation, which in all art is sensuous beauty. The man Tschaikowsky, on the other hand, as much "of the world" as he was—at home in Paris, Venice or Vienna, not less than in St. Petersburg or Tiflis—never could free himself from racial fetters, and always remained Russian to the core. Hence that morbid sensibility, self-love,

exaggeration in despair or pride, which are revealed in the diaries and letters of this curiously introspective mind. What could be more characteristic than the hopeless cry: "Poor Russia! Everything there is so depressing . . . ," and the fatalistic resignation of "Let come, what may!" It is the Slavic soul laid bare.

Peter, the son of Ilja Tschaikowsky, was born May 7, 1840, at the small town of Wotkinsk, where his father was inspector of the mines. The boy's musical talents were neither precocious, nor did he seem to be drawn toward music with indomitable force. He offered no serious resistance to his father's wish that he should study law. He entered the government service and worked for a time at the Ministry of Justice in St. Petersburg. His acquaintance with musicians like the brothers Rubinstein—Anton and Nikolai—however, gave his tastes and ambitions a different direction, and when Anton became instrumental in

founding the St. Petersburg Conservatory, in 1862, Peter entered the institution as a student of harmony and composition. His quick progress made it possible for him, four years later, to join the faculty of the Moscow Conservatory, founded and directed by Nikolai Rubinstein. He retained his position on the teaching staff until 1877. He was enabled to relinquish his onerous and rather unremunerative task through the generosity of Nadejda von Meck, widow of a rich railroad engineer, who not only helped him out of his momentary embarrassment by paying his debts, but settled on him a yearly stipend of 6000 rubles ($3000), that he might enjoy the leisure necessary to undisturbed creation and find artistic incentive in travelling through foreign lands. This strange benefactor lived most of the time as a recluse on her estates; she and her protégé intentionally never met face to face, but they kept up an extended and intimate correspondence through nearly fifteen years. In her first

letter to Tschaikowsky, December, 1876, she told him that his music made "life easier and pleasanter to live." This unusual friendship, while it lasted, was a great inspiration to the composer. When it ended in 1891 for reasons which were supposed to lie in the financial ruin that threatened Mme. von Meck; when all payments and letters from her stopped, Tschaikowsky wrote: "The inconceivable has happened, and all my ideas of human nature, all my faith in the best of mankind, have been turned upside down. My peace is broken, and the share of joy which fate has allotted me is embittered and spoilt." Tschaikowsky died at St. Petersburg, November 6, 1893, during a cholera epidemic, whispering, it is said, the name of her who had procured him so much happiness and dealt him such a staggering blow.

Tschaikowsky's music, more perhaps than that of most great masters, suffers from a certain unevenness. His inspiration

was not unflagging; he confessed to times of mental depression, when work seemed particularly hard. And yet, in the finest of his orchestral pages, in some of his chamber music, and certain portions of his operas, he plumbs unfathomed depths of pathos or mounts rare heights of ecstasy. His instrumentation is always rich and brilliant; it does not shrink from blatant and barbaric colors; often it is novel and haunting. He is inclined to be spectacular or over-sentimental. Shakespeare's melancholy Prince of Denmark and unhappy lovers of Verona serve him as welcome pegs on which to hang his own moods and disillusionment. Poushkin's nostalgic "Eugene Oniégin" and fantastic "Queen of Spades" are chosen as opera-libretti; Byron's sombre and romantic "Manfred" is provided with a symphonic background. The love of the Russians for elaborate ballets is responsible for some of his most charming and graceful music. Many pieces for the piano and numerous songs

were written in an endeavor to give his publisher "short things" that the public would buy. As a matter of fact, the public bought a great deal of his music, and not alone in Russia. His works were produced in Germany and France as early as 1878. Ten years later his fame was international. In 1891 he accepted an invitation to come to America, to assist in the inauguration of Carnegie Hall, New York. This journey made strong and varied impressions on him. We find in his diary these entries: "I am convinced that I am ten times more famous in America than I am in Europe."—"The Americans strike me as very remarkable."—"We went to see the Brooklyn Bridge. From there we went to see Schirmer, who owns the largest music business in America. Schirmer begged to be allowed to publish some of my compositions."—"The houses downtown are simply colossal [1891!]; I cannot understand how any one can live on the

13th floor!"—"Quite the worst part of a sea-voyage is having to know all the passengers on board."

But not only of this American visit do we find an interesting account in these notes and letters of Tschaikowsky. We learn to know a singular musician who adored Mozart and hated Handel, worshipped Schumann and saw little in Chopin, thought the world of Grieg, but wrote after hearing *Tristan und Isolde* for the first time in Berlin, January, 1883: "The work does not give me any pleasure, although I am glad to have heard it, for it has done much to strengthen my previous views of Wagner." We read of his infatuation for Bizet's *Carmen*, which he pronounces the ideal opera; from Rome he writes in December, 1881: "Liszt's works leave me cold." He delights in the fluent melodies of Delibes' ballet *Sylvia*, and says of Brahms: "He has no charms for me." His estimate of the "Russian School" is significant. "Cui

is an amateur. . . . Borodin has not as much taste as Cui, and his technique is so poor that he cannot write a bar without assistance." Moussorgsky is "used up" and "likes what is coarse, unpolished and ugly." Rimsky-Korsakof, in his opinion, is the best in this circle of five, but he sums up his verdict in characterizing Balakiref as the head of a group that "unites so many undeveloped, falsely developed, or prematurely decayed, talents."

In one of his first letters to Mme. von Meck he tried to account for their mutual sympathy by a common bond which linked them together, and which consisted, as he put it, in their "suffering from the same malady," namely, misanthropy. Tschaikowsky is at his best when he feels worst, nor is this meant facetiously. The man who could write from Rome: "My brother and I have just been to see St. Peter's; all I have gained by it is overwhelming physical fatigue"; who (half-humorously only!)

called music "this detestable art, which seems to possess the quality of interesting everybody"—this man succeeded, as no one else has, in expressing by means of music a temperament distinctly perverse, though peculiarly human. And therefore the *Symphonie pathétique* and *Francesca da Rimini* will probably carry his name down to many another generation afflicted with the heritage of that "same malady," and finding balm in listening to these superbly poignant works.

XIX
GRIEG

Only by contact with the art of foreign nations does the art of a country gain that individual and separate life which we call nationality.

—*Oscar Wilde*

XIX

EDVARD GRIEG

The ancestors of Edvard Grieg, on his father's side, were Scottish; his mother came of purely Scandinavian stock. He was born June 15, 1843, at Bergen, a small trading town in the nothernmost part of Norway, land of the midnight sun, fir-hung and snow-capped mountains, deep blue sea-fjords; land of ancient *sagas*, telling the deeds of mighty Norse gods and heroic forebears; land of songs so old that their origin is lost in the dim beginnings of its fabled story. From generation to generation these songs were transmitted, songs that accompanied the toil or pleasures of sturdy inhabitants who jealously guarded their seclusion and racial traditions.

Edvard Grieg fell heir not only to this treasure of aboriginal melody, but from his mother he directly inherited musical talents

of an uncommon order. She was his first music-teacher. He learned to play the piano when he was six, and began to compose at the age of twelve. In his fifteenth year he played his youthful creations for Ole Bull, the picturesque and far-famed violinist, who was visiting the Griegs, and earnestly advised the parents to let the boy become a musician. Edvard was sent to the Leipzig Conservatory and received there a thorough musical education. He studied piano, theory, counterpoint and composition, applying himself with such strenuous zeal that in 1860, as a result of overwork, he was seriously ill with lung trouble, and the effects of the malady left his health permanently impaired. After a sojourn in his native country, the invigorating air of which did much to improve his condition, he returned to Leipzig and continued his studies until he graduated in 1862.

So far, his music adhered more or less to the Mendelssohnian ideals which were

preached as gospel truth at Leipzig. But after he went to Copenhagen, in 1863, where he met Gade, Hartman, and young Nordraak, the influence of these men—especially of the last named—awakened in him an appreciation for the beauties of Scandinavian folk-tunes; he realized their possibilities of artistic development, and he began to adopt the peculiar inflections and modulations of this national music, thereby giving his work its novel and distinguishing mark. He became the apostle of a nationalistic school engaged in systematic propaganda, and succeeded, by the force of his genius, in gaining universal recognition and admiration for the music of the North. His example has had many followers, and to-day Scandinavia possesses a musical literature as distinct as the works of her poets and novelists, and as typical as that of Russia, Spain or France.

In later years, Grieg characterized his purpose and achievement in these words: "Those who can appreciate this kind of

music will be delighted at the extraordinary originality of these tunes, their blending of delicacy and grace with rough power and untamed wildness as regards the melody and, more particularly, the rhythm. These traditional tunes, handed down from an age when the Norwegian peasantry was isolated from the world in its solitary mountain valleys, all bear the stamp of an imagination equally daring and bizarre. My object in arranging this music for the pianoforte was to attempt to raise these folk-tunes to an artistic level by harmonizing them in a style suitable to their nature." However, it must not be understood that Grieg's work is chiefly or even largely based on existing material. By far the greater part of his themes are free and original inventions, which, though consciously cast in the moulds of "traditional tunes," are vivified by a personal element which is wholly Grieg's.

After a short stay in Rome, during the winter of 1865, Grieg went to live at Christiania, where he remained for eight years, busied with composing, teaching and conducting. He married his cousin Nina Hagerup in 1867, and his wife became known as the best interpreter for her husband's songs, being especially liked in England, which the Griegs visited several times. The composer received valuable encouragement from Franz Liszt, who treated him with signal kindness when they met, in 1868, at Rome. In 1874 the Swedish crown awarded Grieg a yearly stipend for his life. His native Bergen now became his favorite abode. Not far from the town, amid the wonders of the fjords, he lived in surroundings that were congenial and inspiring. It was there that most of his masterworks were composed. His intimacy with two eminent Scandinavian writers, Björnstjerne Björnson and Henrik Ibsen, influenced him in setting many poems by the first and in providing

the latter's *Peer Gynt* with music that did much to carry Grieg's fame abroad. It was at Bergen, too, that Grieg died on September 4, 1907, succumbing at last to his old malady.

His figure was short, he always looked frail, and was slightly bent from asthma. Tschaikowsky, who greatly admired the Norwegian's music, painted him thus in his diary: "He had an unusual charm, and blue eyes, not very large, but irresistibly fascinating, recalling the glance of a charming and candid child."

Foremost in importance and scope among Grieg's compositions are his songs and his piano pieces, especially the latter; and here again the shorter and more "lyrical" ones contain the finest essence of his exquisite and personal style. With a simplicity and economy of means that are the secret of mastery, he develops a mood, tender and elegiac, or rollicking and droll, that is always unmistakably tinged with the

colors of Norwegian folk-music. His violin sonatas, his piano concertos as well as his orchestral pieces, all bear the hall-mark of his individuality: refined craftsmanship, sensitive perception, and ardent love for his home-land.

It is not improbable that with the recognition, by the general public, of Grieg's "nationalistic" tendencies, the interest in other national schools of music was greatly kindled. Folk-songs, the root of all racially distinctive music, are traditional tunes, bequeathed from age to age, of uncertain origin in most cases, often dating back to the vague beginnings of race-consciousness. As "comparative-etymology"—the analysis and comparison of word roots common or related to various languages—has rendered great services towards obtaining a clearer insight into historical regroupings of tribes and peoples, so does a comparative study of folk-songs add a great deal of light to the understanding of human civilisation.

Song was born with man. It accompanied, ever since his cultural infancy, the labor of single or concerted effort, making, by rhythmic regularity, his task more easy and the work more telling. It accompanied, ever since he became subject to emotional sway, the rites of his worship, the pleasures of the dance; in short, it was indispensable to many acts of private and communal life.

While traces of folk-songs may be encountered, undisguised as well as "refined," in the art-music of the middle ages, sacred and secular, the development of definite nationalistic styles is of rather recent date. In Mozart and Beethoven an occasional snatch of melody betrays kinship to some "popular" air of their day: in Haydn we may meet with a suggestion of "Hungarian" music; in Corelli, with an echo from Spain; but it is not until the early part and middle of the nineteenth century that we can speak of truly Slavic, Spanish, or any other national art-music. Spain has but few authentic

representatives who have achieved universal success, such as Albeniz and Granados; but the "Spanish manner" has found more imitators than any other, especially among the neighboring French, from Bizet and Chabrier to Debussy and Ravel. The Rhapsodies of Liszt have made the rhythms and melodic inflections of Hungary the common property of the world. Grieg, aided by Gade and Nordraak, established the identity of Scandinavian music; men like Sibelius and Palmgren have added the Finnish note to these voices of the North. Glinka, Moussorgsky, Balakiref—with their numerous followers—are the ancestors of a line that has given us Scriabin and Stravinsky. From Russia may come a regeneration of music. Poland's spirit lives in the melodies of Chopin and Moniuszko. Bohemia is worthily represented by Smetana and Dvořák. The latter, during his sojourn in America, became interested in the music of the colored race.

Exoticism and orientalism—mostly of the "pseudo" kind—are rampant in modern music. They seem to offer a legitimate excuse for the grotesqueness, the certain barbarism, by which to-morrow is trying to abolish the neurotic super-refinement of yesterday. There is "colored" music as there is "Hebrew" music, unmistakably charged with the musical idiosyncracies of each race. But neither can be regarded as the soil for a "national music" that may give rise to a school of national composers. Hence the clever use which MacDowell and other musicians have made of negro or Indian themes will never lead to an American style. That is already shaping from different material, and promises to be as elastic, and yet uncompromising, as is the American character itself. The coat will be of so many colors, that the total effect will amount to the creation of a new shade. And that is what we call, in music, Progress.

XX
DEBUSSY

Car nous voulons la Nuance encor,
Pas la Couleur, rien que la nuance!
Oh! la nuance seule fiance
Le rêve au rêve et la flûte au cor!

—*Paul Verlaine*

more modern than Mendelssohn, Berlioz—in spite of his shortcomings—younger and fresher than Brahms?

Haydn, Mendelssohn and Brahms gave new and firmer lines to the form; they perfected the container rather than the contents. Nor are their services to be judged lightly for that reason. Bach's mighty genius, on the other hand, was content with stereotype dance-suites, the "concerto" inherited from Corelli, and churchly conventions dating back still further. Schubert's fertile imagination was lost in the mould of the Beethovenian symphony, which clung to him like a robe too big for his stature; Berlioz, exalted like a god and platitudinous like a *bourgeois*, created forms and means cyclopean, which had that drawback of one-eyed perspective—lack of depth. And yet these were, and always will be, moderns.

It is not mere posteriority, then, that confers this jealously sought distinction upon the work of a man; it is rather the spirit

which pervades the work, the renovating force and degree of independence. But it is difficult to say just in what musical independence, or originality, consists. It is easy enough to point to this or that chord, to one or another harmonic departure, encountered for the first time in a certain composition. That is as far as we may go in labelling and dating new ideas. Such chord, however, or such harmonic departure, will be found latent, perhaps, in the works of older and lesser masters; it may be nothing but the flower that is drawing its sap from soil tilled by more or less distant and unremembered precursors. Musical history is not a succession, but an overlapping, of different epochs.

And so, while we stand yet bewildered with the burden of beauty bequeathed to us by Debussy, his achievement already enters the sanctuary of Classicism, that temple which has withstood the onset of so many "moderns" throughout all ages, and

which perpetually finds itself assailed anew. Debussy himself would not have had it otherwise: "Is it not our duty to find the symphonic formula which fits our time, one which progress, daring and modern victory demand? The century of aëroplanes has a right to its own music."

If ever genius gave wings to music and sent it soaring up to heights to which—agile pedestrian—it could not have risen otherwise, it was the liberating influence of Debussy. His hypersensitive ear was attuned to overhear the shy tremor of Springtide in the woods, to record the primeval song of the wave, to note the chord-progressions of the sunset mirrored in the lake, to catch the overtones that float above the perfumes of the night. His aim differed from that of his predecessors, and to reach it he had to find new ways. In music, new ways lie generally in the direction of unexplored or unused discords. The line which separates our conceptions of concordant and discordant

sounds has gradually changed position. Tone is the sensuous element of music, and in order to enlarge its scope, we must convince the hearer that tone-combinations which the ear has heretofore rejected as harsh and unsatisfactory, can be made to sound sensuously beautiful and satisfying. That the application of such novel stuff should condition a new technique or procedure, is wholly incidental.

We are too near the marvelous manifestations of Debussy's personality to see clearly the point to which his powers rose, at which they may have halted, or from which they even may have sunk. It is for a later generation, this profitless task of critical determination. Meanwhile, the materials for Debussy's biography are less abundant than with Wagner, Weber or Mozart. But the significance of his life is none the less evident.

Claude [-Achille] Debussy was born August 22, 1862, at Saint-Germain-en-Laye, the picturesque old residential town of French

royalty, only a few miles distant from Paris. All his biographers emphasize the point that in childhood his musical talents were far from obvious, that he did not receive piano lessons until he was nine years old, and that even then his father still destined him for the navy.

In 1873 he entered the Paris Conservatory, that formidable stronghold of tradition. He rapidly advanced in the piano classes of Marmontel, winning three times the hallowed reward of academic "medals." His exploits in the harmony course met, on the contrary, with equally signal and repeated failure. These studies were interrupted, in 1879, by a journey to Russia in the capacity of "privy pianist" attached to the retinue of the wife of a rich railroad engineer. His sojourn in St. Petersburg and Moscow is said to have brought him in contact with the works of the young Russian composers and especially with the exotic and uncharted music of gypsy bands, whence he

may have derived a taste for barbaric splendor, Oriental languor and "lawless" harmonies. He resumed his studies at the Paris Conservatory in 1880, winning a first prize in the *classe d'accompagnement*, which consisted in improvising, at the keyboard, a harmonization of a given melody or bass. He did not feel drawn to attend the organ classes of César Franck. His teacher in composition was Ernest Guiraud (1837–1892), a man of culture and musician of taste. He perceived the "insurgent" tendencies of his pupil, and gave him the benevolent advice to keep them in the background until the portals of the Conservatory had definitely shut behind him. This event, eagerly awaited, occurred in 1884, when Debussy won the *Prix de Rome* with his cantata "L'enfant prodigue." The pastoral tenderness of the subject well suited his nature, and though the music caused the shaking of many a gray head, it had to be

counted the work of an original and well-equipped composer.

From Rome Debussy sent the obligatory *envois* to the French *Institut*, and, remembering Guiraud's remark, he threw restraint to the balmy winds that blew around the Villa Médicis. The result was his first official clash with smug conventionality. His orchestral suite "Printemps" was fiercely denounced by the accredited sages of the government, and when they refused to have it performed, the composer, in turn, withdrew his next *envoi*, the setting of Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel" in a French translation. It amounted to a declaration of hostilities; the war was on, not to be terminated until thirty years later. The "Debussyistes" began to form a phalanx of enthusiastic and irrepressible supporters whose glory consists in having measured thus early the greatness of their idol.

It was some time after his return from Rome that Debussy is said to have come

across the authentic score of Moussorgsky's opera "Boris Godounov" and to have been deeply interested in the musical vocabulary and syntax of this extraordinary Russian who, at that time, and outside of Russia, was unknown to all but a few musicians. In 1889 Debussy visited Bayreuth, and he knew the tense atmosphere of the *Festspielhügel* from which the Master's figure had disappeared only six years before. We are told that the "Ring" and "Tristan" moved the impressionable youth to tears. He returned to Bayreuth the next summer, but his mind was already set in a trend diametrically opposite to that which Wagner had pursued.

And here it may be well to remember that racial differences would have precluded any other issue. Debussy was essentially Gallic, as were Couperin and Rameau, his nearest kin among French composers. Moreover, as German poetry at the beginning of the nineteenth century had precipitated roman-

ticism in music, so did the French poets of the impressionist and symbolist school imprint their creeds and methods upon the French musicians of the declining century. It was Verlaine, distiller of volatile and aromatic phrases, painter in iridescent words, whose poignant, yet so elusive, verses inspired Debussy to write the first songs (*Mandoline; Ariettes oubliées*, 1890; *Fêtes Galantes*, 1st Ser., 1892) which have all the salient qualities of the composer's final style, a style unprecedented and unmatched. In 1892 was also written the "Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun," based on Stéphane Mallarmé's unique poem. As the poet had merely wished to give verbal suggestions of a mood, a passionate attitude, a vague concern, fleeting and unseizable, so did the composer mix his sonorous half-tints into a wondrously frail and yet suggestive color-scheme. It remains among all of Debussy's orchestral pieces the most perfect; what seemed in 1894 sheer madness, has proved to be sane and

sober art, devised with a clear-sighted craftsmanship and revealing now the inevitable consequentialness of the composer's cool and deliberate reasoning.

In the summer of 1892, Debussy chanced to read Maeterlinck's drama "Pelléas et Mélisande," and was instantly taken with the desire to set it to music. He obtained Maeterlinck's authorization and went to work, beginning with the duo of the fourth act. Ten years passed before all the music took shape, conceived though it was in one moment of intense creative impregnation. Like Wagner's "Tristan und Isolde" and Mozart's "Magic Flute," its effectiveness as an opera is as debatable as the music to these three plays is indisputably among the greatest ever written. The first public performance of "Pelléas et Mélisande" took place April 30, 1902, at the Opéra-Comique in Paris.

Meanwhile, the String Quartet had been played by Eugène Ysaye and his associates

on December 29, 1893, at the "Société Nationale," that progressive organization of French composers which brought out so many of Debussy's works. Between 1890 and 1900 fall furthermore his earlier piano pieces (none of them ranking with his most distinctive compositions), a number of songs (among them his finest), and the ravishing "Nocturnes" for orchestra. It is significant that the songs of this epoch are the more characteristic and riper works; evidently the music was feeling its way into harmonic *terra ignota* with a guiding-staff lent by the poetry of Verlaine, Beaudelaire and Pierre Louys.

After 1900 the composer became more and more absorbed in the discovery of new pianistic possibilities. Not since Chopin had the row of black and white keys been made to radiate so many different and dazzling hues. The piano became a new instrument. Between 1900 and 1910 appeared, among other things, the superb

"Estampes," containing "Soirée dans Grenade" and "Jardins sous la pluie," and the "Images" (second series), of which the limpid "Reflets dans l'eau," the polyphone "Cloches à travers les feuilles" and the shimmering "Poissons d'or" are the best known. His most important piano works, however, were published after 1910, and comprise the two sets of preludes, twenty-four in all, among which there are some that will long remain the most beautiful things that man has fashioned with our present, unpliant enharmonic scale. They also contain the first signs that the composer's manner had reached the point of degenerating into mannerism; and subsequent works showed Debussy more and more copying Debussy. In a set of Études he seemed intent upon giving labels to these mannerisms himself, upon revealing the principal pianistic devices dear to his fingers. His touch of the piano was indescribable. To hear him play his own music (with an ill-

concealed look of boredom directed at the audience) was a revelation.

In his youth Debussy had known the cares of a struggling genius. For a time the publisher Georges Hartman supported the poor student; later it was Jacques Durand who paid lavishly for the privilege of publishing the master's music. Debussy married twice. He conducted his own works in England and Russia, visiting St. Petersburg and Moscow, for the last time, in the winter before the outbreak of the world war. Towards the end of his life he suffered long and patiently from malignant diseases which caused his death.

Debussy was an astute critic of the work of others as well as his own. He wrote extensively for various daily papers and periodicals. The collection of his critical writings will some day form one of the most interesting and valuable works on musical æsthetics. He seems to have shown the way to his successors, when he wrote in November,

1913: "Let us purify our music. Let us try to scarify it. Let us seek to obtain a music which is barer (*plus nue*). We must guard against the stifling of emotion under the heap of motives and superimposed designs: how can we render its bloom or its force while we remain preoccupied with all those details of writing, while we try to maintain an impossible discipline among the swarming pack of little themes which topple over and jump on each other to bite poor sentiment in the legs and send it off seeking salvation in flight! As a general rule, each time that, in art, someone thinks of complicating a form or a sentiment, it means that he does not know what he wants to say."

CONCLUSION

In these pages, no attempt has been made to analyze, technically, any of the works mentioned. The musical student cannot do without such analysis; to the listener, in general, it is profitless. While the painter should know each nerve and sinew in the body, he bids you behold in his picture only an attitude of the human form, destined to make you share his vision of its inherent beauty. Musical appreciation is not gained by the process of dissection, any more than is a realization of the warmth in Rubens' flesh-tints by visits to the morgue. Music—all pulse and vibration—is the most "living" of the arts. Its sensuous appeal to our organism is more direct than that of any other art; it is also more specific. Its rational plan and contents require mental grasp. Thus fullest receptivity, keenest enjoyment, belong to him who comes to music with

a natural predisposition, a special state of mind, and more or less training.

To listen attentively to certain kinds of music is often very difficult. Music's finest power being that of firing our fancy, we sometimes lose consciousness of a composition's actual progress, and abandon ourselves to the flight of our thoughts. Nor will each hearer take away the same impressions, for the attention may fasten upon, and become absorbed by, different qualities or characteristics of the music. Discrimination in art is a privilege of gust and culture, more frequently innate than acquired. But one may at least learn to distinguish between various types and styles of music, and recognize the intentions of each. Incomprehension should not lead to condemnation. Personal "taste" is not a brevet to the rank of critic. Yet, the best musical criticism is colored by individual prejudices.

Music, in order to satisfy the highest demands, must be well made, sincere and in-

spired. Much music wishes merely to entertain; nor is it for that reason less important or legitimate. The rarified air on mountain peaks is not the normal atmosphere for all mankind. A little garden patch in the valley, sweet with the healthy smell of rosemary and phlox, is good to breathe in. But a room, rank with the scent of wilting heliotrope and violets, is obnoxious. And yet, so many people are content with music that is as fetid weeds. Simplicity, frank unconcern in music, is a virtue; commonplaceness, pretentious show, an abomination.

Music is bountiful, it is of all times and places: it brings us the pleasurable pains of utter spiritual transport; it caters to the painful pleasures of vulgar frenzy. Strike a little above midway between these two extremes, and you enter—not a temple nor a bagnio—but a palace, spacious with varied chambers. Large and small, lit brightly or mysteriously darkened, they offer shelter according to your moods and needs. Street

and number may indicate your station in the lists of the community; the address of your soul is that apartment, in the house of music, which you occupy.

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